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Organization Development Network

Organization Development
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401 North Michigan Avenue
Suite 2100
Chicago, IL 60611
T: 312.321.5136
F: 312.673.6836
www.odnetwork.org

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Speaking of Change

This issue of the ODP includes case studies about how change is communicated and implemented, articles that deal with the changes needed to operate a global organization, the role of metaphors in change initiatives, how to measure the impact of OD change processes, and an article from the ODP archives that questions our assumptions about change.

Whole system change approaches are being used in many parts of the world, but little has been done to examine the efficacy of these approaches. **Steven Cady** and **Kimberly Fleshman** present the Characteristics of Success and the Keys to Success that emerged from interviews with a cross section of practitioners who have facilitated amazingly successful whole system change processes.

Beverley Patwell, **Donna Gray**, and **Steve Kanellakos** provide a model for service excellence, offer several innovative approaches for implementing culture shifts, and describe the practical steps, challenges, and successes in developing and implementing a strategy to foster a culture of service excellence throughout the Ottawa, Canada's city services and operations. They also discuss the evaluation framework they established to assess the project's impact.

Blair Browning and **Suzanne Boys** offer a case study of a university going through a culture change and the impact interim leadership had on that change.

The article assesses the practices of twenty-four university leaders as they navigated a new "Vision" for the university that was created by the school's president.

In order to thrive and operate synergistically across geographic domains, global organizations need to develop global glue. **Annie Viets** tells the story of how a New Zealand dairy products corporation endeavored to foster a common culture and values to unite its operations on six continents.

How can we develop cultural competence to successfully lead international organizations? **Anne Rød** describes a systemic approach to understanding how to reflect critically on how we are operating in an organizational system and to explore what is needed to ensure optimum team performance.

Metaphors enhance our knowledge and contribute to our understanding the complex world around us. **Mary Jean Vignone** demonstrates how listening and identifying the metaphors we use can improve communications, promote more effective change processes, encourage self-reflection, and foster professional development.

How can the OD field raise its credibility to be thought of as a partner in strategic change efforts? **Lisa Nielsen** examines what types of OD intervention evaluations are currently being utilized in the field of OD and what avenues for further development may be useful. She also explores why evaluation has not

become standard procedure in OD and how this void potentially affects the OD field's ability to sustain itself in a changing business marketplace.

Robert Marshak re-introduces his 1994 article on the metaphors of change that challenges predominant assumptions about how change occurs. He adds a post-script about the importance of the "anthropological mind," the efficacy of OD, and the need to continually raise questions about assumptions in order to encourage new possibilities.

Finally, **Therese Yaeger** and **Peter Sorensen** provide a Case History on a large group intervention. Faced with having to develop and implement a large group intervention in a Wall Street firm, an internal OD consultant seeks help with rolling out this major change initiative. Three external OD consultants, **Gina Hinrichs**, **Angie Keister**, and **Eric Sanders** offer their advice.

I look forward to receiving articles about applied research, theory and evidence based practice, innovative approaches, and case studies. Email your proposals and articles to me at jvogelsang@earthlink.net. I am also interested in your recommendations about how the ODP and the other ODN publications (*Practicing OD* and *Seasonings*) can contribute to your being successful in your OD practice.

John Vogelsang

Former Editors

Larry Porter	1973–1981
Raymond Weil	1982–1984
Don & Dixie Van Eynde	1985–1988
David Noer	1989–1992
Celeste Coruzzi	1993–1995
David Nicoll	1996–2000
Marilyn E. Blair	2000–2008

OD's Role in Improving Mergers and Acquisitions

Special Issue Editors: Jim Sanders and David Jamieson

The success rate for mergers and acquisitions (M&A) continues to be a problem despite increased activity and awareness of the importance of human, organizational, and culture aspects of M&A in improving financial, organization, and individual outcomes. Organization development provides a broad range of methods, practices, and approaches that are relevant to M&A and organization restructuring. However, the utilization of OD approaches and the understanding of effective practices are inconsistent.

This special issue is designed to respond to that gap with two intended outcomes:

1. Improve the practice of OD approaches in M&A by documenting specific methods and practices that have high impact.
2. Increase the utilization of OD approaches by documenting the value, roles, activities, and outcomes of OD approaches.

Potential topics include, but are not limited to the following areas:

- » **Organizing the effort:** How are OD approaches deployed in the M&A effort? Who provides the OD perspective? When are OD perspectives included in the M&A process? How is the OD perspective included across the functional areas involved in the M&A activity?
- » **Strategy phase:** What is OD's role in strategy and initial acquisition identification? How does the organization develop a strategy that provides a complete view of strategic fit? What are the characteristics of fit? How do you determine fit? What specific methods and practices improve elements within the strategy phase? How do you prepare the organization? What is the role of leader coaching, supervisor training, and organizational readiness?

- » **Targeting and initial communications phase:** How is initial interest established? What is the method to establish the benefit of a relationship? How do you decide who to involve? How do you manage the restrictions of public company disclosure while communicating with multiple levels of the organization?
- » **Due diligence phase:** What are OD approaches to due diligence? How do you assess culture, talent, and organization design fit? How do you work with the restrictions in access to data involved with competitive auctions and legal constraints on engagement pre-closing?
- » **Closing and announcement:** How do you communicate the M&A decision to stakeholders?
- » **Integration:** How is the transition team organized? What is the method of team member selection, composition, leadership, and operation? What interventions work best in building transition team effectiveness? How do you ensure access to the value offering which motivates the relationship? How do you make organization design decisions, talent retention or exit decisions, and determine new roles? How do you create long term

motivation, alignment, and focus and reduce unwanted turnover?

- » **Culture:** How do you manage differences in organization culture, national culture, language, and organizational histories?
- » **Organization learning and improvement:** How do you create organization readiness for M&A, learning and improvement from M&A activities, organizational competence in performing M&A? What roles, skills, or practices improve effectiveness for serial acquirers?

Article proposals due January 31.
Articles due April 23.

Proposals and articles should be sent to the two special issue editors and the ODP editor (jvogelsang@earthlink.net). Submissions should follow the *OD Practitioner* manuscript submission guidelines (details at www.odnetwork.org). The special issue editors will screen the articles and provide feedback. Final articles will be reviewed by two members of the editorial board. Case studies, OD intervention descriptions, new conceptual thinking, and interviews are encouraged.

About the Special Issue Editors

Jim Sanders is Clinical Professor of Entrepreneurship at the R.H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland. Recently he was Director of Strategy and M&A for Harris Corporation and Honeywell International. He is currently Board Member and leader for the Best Practices in M&A Program for the Association for Corporate Growth. He has worked on more than 40 acquisitions in strategy, deal maker, and integration roles. Earlier he was an OD consultant. He can be reached at jsanders@rhsmith.umd.edu.

David W. Jamieson, PhD, is Department Chair, Organization Learning and Development at University of St. Thomas, Practicum Director for the MSOD Program at American University, and previously Adjunct Professor MSOD Program at Pepperdine University. He has nearly 40 years of experience consulting to organizations on leadership, change, strategy, design, and human resource issues. He can be reached at djamieson@stthomas.edu.

Innovative and Emerging OD Practices in the UK

Special Issue Editor: Mee-Yan Cheung-Judge

After the early pioneer work of the Tavistock Institute in the UK during the 1940s, the field of OD seemed to disappear from the UK scene. Very few academic institutions taught OD as a discipline, only a few small and invisible OD networks existed, mainly run by private consultancy firms; and there has been almost a minimalist effort to publish their work. Simultaneously, the development of the OD field has been associated primarily with the work of American academics and practitioners. Until recently, UK and European practitioners have often looked to the USA for further OD development and read primarily the publications of US colleagues.

The scene has changed in the UK. Those faithful OD practitioners who had been operating in an “underground” fashion began to lead the expansion of the field; more academic institutions started to give attention to the training and development of practitioners; more publications appeared in the OD field authored by UK practitioners; and thousands of jobs were created in the corporate world, the public sector, and third sector organizations. The time has come for a dedicated ODP issue to help document the innovative and emerging work of UK practitioners.

Key questions we hope to pursue in this special issue:

- » What context gives rise to the re-emergence of the OD field in the UK? And what factors have made the field emerge with a new form of rigor in the UK in the past 5 years?
- » Under what conditions do the UK OD practitioners do their work? And what kind of adaptation do they need to make in their methodologies in order to be accepted by their clients in a different cultural setting?

- » What specific contributions and what specific innovations have they made to the field that can help inform OD practices in the international community?
- » What new knowledge and understanding of OD can the UK practitioners offer to their colleagues and what core OD values and principles continue to be held dearly by the UK practitioners that are reflected in their practice?

The format

There will be four categories of articles:

- » Innovative and adaptive use of OD methods to achieve results: Headline case studies that share the innovative and adaptive practice of a specific methodology or a creative use of mixed methodologies to achieve what results. Each case study's length: 700 words.
- » Evaluation of the impact of OD work on client systems: Joint client and practitioner accounts of what has been achieved through OD intervention, focusing on the evaluation of the work of OD practitioners through the voices of the clients. Each account's length: 700 words.
- » Contributions that UK practitioners have made to the field of OD: UK practitioners reflecting on how their work

has contributed to the development of the field in the past decades. Each reflection's length: 600 words

- » More substantial change projects: Articles that demonstrate innovative and adaptive use of OD methods in change situations while holding on to core OD values and principles, as well as taking the field forward. Work that has created value for the client system based upon practitioners' and clients' views about what the field of OD can continue to contribute to fostering effective organizations. Each article's length: 3,500–4,000 words.

Article proposals due April 2.
Articles due July 31.

Proposals and articles should be sent to: Mee Yan Cheung-Judge (LMYCJ@quality-equality.com) and John Vogelsang (jvogelsang@earthlink.net). Submissions to the special issue should follow the *OD Practitioner* manuscript submission guidelines (details at www.odnetwork.org). The special issue editor and the ODP editor will screen the articles and provide feedback. Final articles will be reviewed by two members of the ODP editorial board.

About the Special Issue Editor

Mee-Yan Cheung-Judge, PhD, held various academic appointments in USA for 8 years before becoming a practitioner in the UK in 1983. She is the creator and driving force behind Quality & Equality, a UK based international OD consulting firm. Her strong areas of expertise are Organization Development, Big System change, and Equality and Diversity. She is a campaigner for OD education in the UK, instrumental in setting up various OD programs/tracks both in academic institutions as well as in professional associations. Because of her tireless campaigning work to upgrade OD education in the UK she was voted one of the 25 most influential thinkers in HR by the UK publication *HR Magazine* in 2008. She is also Dean of the NTL OD certificate program in the UK, trustee on the ODN Board, and author of *Organization Development: A Practitioner's Guide for OD and HR*. She can be reached at LMYCJ@quality-equality.com.

Amazing Change

Stories from Around the World

By Steven H. Cady and
Kimberly J. Fleshman

When considering change initiatives, what does amazing success look like? With all the important collaborative work being done around the world, little evidence exists that examines the efficacy of approaches referred to as Whole System Collaboration and Change (WSCC) methods; also referred to as large group methods. Some examples of WSCC methods include: Appreciative Inquiry, Charrettes, Future Search, Open Space, Real Time Strategic Change, Whole Scale Change, and World Café (Holman, Devane, & Cady, 2007). In this article, we present findings from interviews with expert practitioners who have facilitated or co-facilitated amazingly successful WSCC processes, share a model highlighting characteristics of success and its key drivers, and discuss implications for building evidence in this emerging field. The most important contribution of this article is that it describes for the first time a research study looking across a set of lived experiences that affirms and deepens what we know while setting the stage for more practical exploration.

Part of a WSCC process, whether looking at Kotter's, Lewin's, Schein's or any other model, includes transforming a system into a unified whole. The science worldview currently being explained to us by chaos theorists and leaders like Fritjof Capra, Peggy Holman, and Meg Wheatley emphasizes the awareness of and focus on systems thinking. We must no longer see the world as a machine with isolated pockets of problems needing to be “fixed.”

Wholeness is literally a “healing”

experience. The etymology of “whole” and of “healing” is found in an old British word, “weal,” which is “a sound, healthy, or prosperous state of a person or thing” (Merriam-Webster.com); “prosperity; happiness; welfare” (dictionary.com). This definition demonstrates that the term “whole” means more than “all of something,” it also includes the idea of a healthy balance, unity, and completeness. When applied to a system we refer to the regularly interdependent group of bodies forming a unified whole interacting under the influence of related forces. Transforming such a system into a unified whole is the operation of changing from one configuration or expression into another in all parts of the system. In order for true transformation to take place, the organization will always need to be “whole.” Thus, the notion of “whole system transformation” means more than simply a change that impacts the entire system; it means that the entire system is involved in creating itself anew. The focus moves from imposing change to crafting a transformation of the system by the system itself.

Procedure and Analysis

Leaders in the field of WSCC methods were asked in writing for recommended names of practitioners who work as consultants leading or co-leading transformative experiences and events utilizing WSCC methods as described by Bunker and Alban (1997) and Holman, Devane, and Cady (2007). Each of the recommended practitioners was sent an email describing the study and

requesting an interview. An interview time was established in which each interview lasted about 90 minutes. We analyzed 16 interviews that represented a cross section of methods. These interviews addressed four main areas of interest:

1. Questions that focused on the participants experience with whole system transformation, “how many projects have you led or co-led as a consultant?”
2. Questions that focused on a successful critical incident, consultant leading or supporting a WSCC intervention, “describe that experience to me.”
3. Questions that focused on a challenging critical incident “tell me about a time when you encountered your most difficult challenge as an internal and/or external consultant leading or supporting a WSCC intervention, “describe that experience to me.”
4. Questions that focused on demographic information (e.g., gender, ethnicity, education, and age).

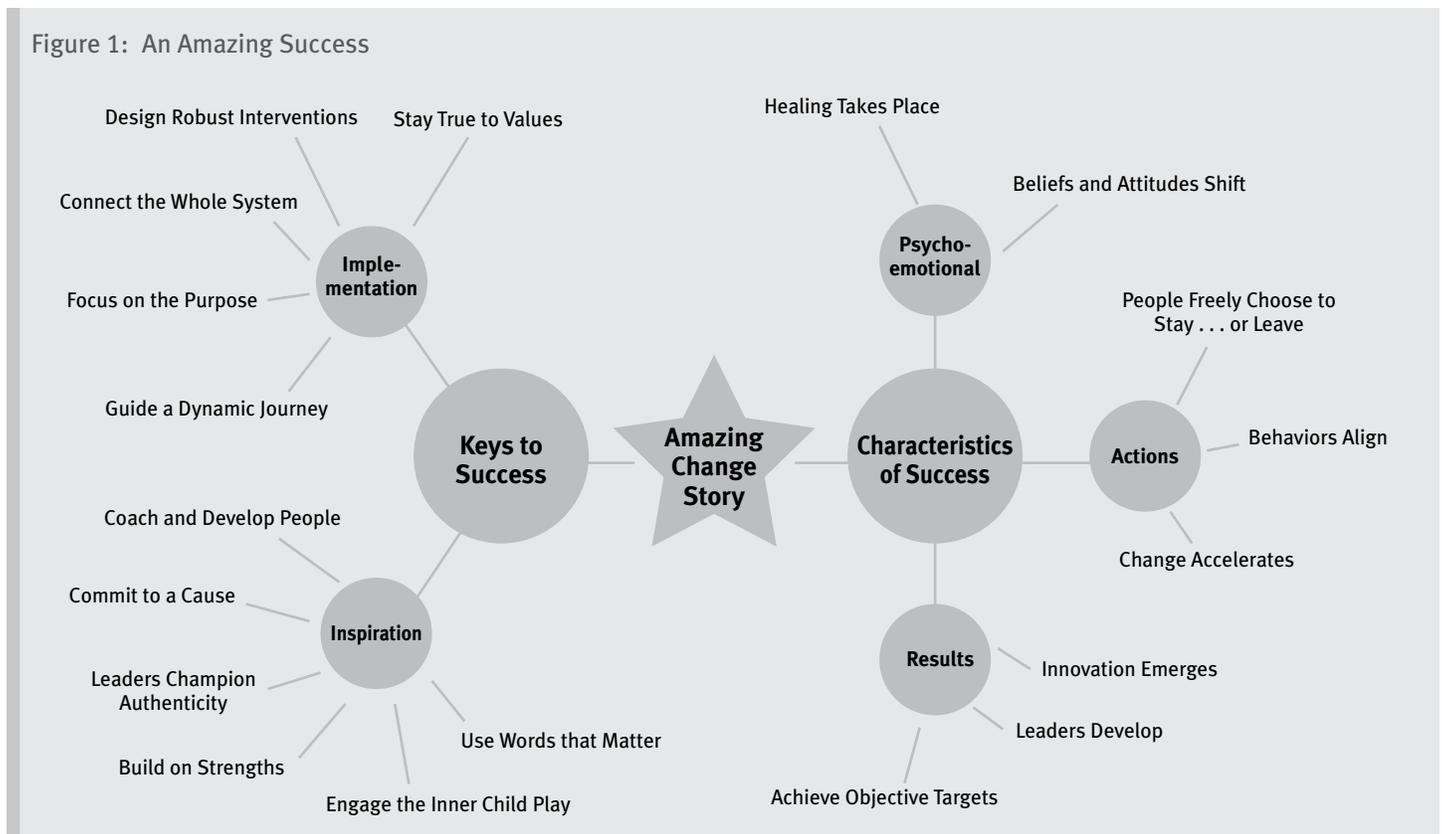
All interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. Each transcribed

interview was shared with the participant and clarifications were made. Any clarifications were marked and noted as additions to the data. Drawing from Strauss and Corbin (1990), Erlandson, Harris, Skipper and Allen (1993), and Bogdan and Biklen (1998), an inductive analysis process was used to develop a thematic framework. First, the transcribed data were coded by each segment of the transcription that showed a unique thought, idea, or meaning. This could be a paragraph, sentence(s), or a part of a sentence. NVivo (Bazely & Richards, 2000) was used to facilitate the coding of the data. In so doing, we were able to automate the coding process more quickly and efficiently than manual methods through categorizing, searching, and visually organizing the information. Each theme was established as a node in the form of parents, children, and siblings. Three scholars from the fields of organizational behavior, organizational development, and psychology reviewed the results and discussed the groupings of ideas. From these discussions, patterns inductively emerged that provided for a heuristic

set of results arranged under Characteristics of Success and Keys to Success (see Figure 1).

In response to the question, “tell me about a time when you experienced your own most Amazing Success as an internal and/or external consultant leading or supporting a WSCC intervention... describe that experience to me,” the interviewees expressed a sense of knowing. They would say things like, “Oh, yes, I have one in mind” or “Okay, good... I know that.” Then they were asked, “Take me on the whole journey from the very beginning to the end; bring it to life for me.” The interviews were full of emotion, laughter, tears, somber responses, and silence. The stories when described through the lens of the results presented here in Figure 1 lend themselves to some insightful and practical learning. In some cases, these results may seem obvious, in other cases, intriguing. We hope to set the stage for more practical research that will be described in later sections. Before we get to that discussion, we will elaborate on what we found.

Figure 1: An Amazing Success



Characteristics of Success

The words “amazing success” can conjure up all kinds of thoughts with a variety of meanings. What we uncovered in the interviews are eight Characteristics of Success that fell into three core characteristics (see *Table 1*).

Psycho-emotional

Psycho-emotional refers to mind and soul states that spontaneously arise and result in affective and physiological changes. Simply put, practitioners called this the “paradigm shift.” The shift was something that they look for and could experience themselves. One of the common words used was “healing”--in terms of the self, between people and groups, and among the whole system involved. One practitioner stated:

The immediate pay off was... the healing that took place. This was evident in the closing circle when participant after participant thanked my client for bringing them together in this way and allowing them to finally get past the issues that had been holding them apart for so long.

In addition to the healing, there was a shift in the beliefs and attitudes of those involved. The attitudes revolved around improved morale, more happiness, less stress, and a general appreciation or gratefulness for the process being undertaken and for the way it was undertaken. Evidence of the shift in attitudes was seen through “laughter” and “smiling.” There was also a greater respect for one another with a particular focus on leadership. People believed that they were heard and that this time something was going to happen; they could trust again. Another word that cropped up was hope. People believed that the ideas and decisions made were theirs. They envisioned a future that they owned and believed could happen. Such a shift was described by one practitioner who was working with two warring ethnic groups with a history of killing and maiming each other:

Table 1: Characteristics of Success

Core Characteristic	Amazing Success Looks Like
Psycho-Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Healing takes place between and among departments, factions, groups, and more. » Beliefs and attitudes shift through a new found hope and a trust in each other.
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Members freely choose to stay or leave the system of their own accord. » Organizational members align their actions with the whole in order to be in harmony. » Behaviors accelerate the change in a more fluid and energetic fashion.
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Innovation emerges from all over the place, some new and some old. » Leadership competencies develop at all levels, as people take on more responsibility. » Objective targets are achieved that add measureable value.

At the end of that, we were standing in a circle and there wasn't a dry eye in the place and the next thing I knew, this incredible group was holding hands and saying nothing, just pure silence. But what we noticed was when we started, the conversation was really about there is no respect, there is no trust... there is no hope. Gradually over the course of two days, we began to see hope, trust, and respect, really just sort of emerging just out of the way people treated each other.

Actions

The next dimension of success focused on the action of people; literally the focus here is on movement. To begin, people choose to freely leave the system versus being forced out. This is a subtle but important distinction. A person sees that the future direction has been developed by the whole and the whole is moving together; as a result, the person leaves the system because he or she does not fit or is not willing to do what is necessary to be part of the whole. As one practitioner stated, “allowing them to choose to self-select out and that's a part of it, part of declaring who you are and what you want to be...”; and another practitioner emphatically shared, “I think what it was, was seeing people... that have their whole background (in a

particular profession) understand that they are going to have to operate in an entirely new way.” This leads to the second notion of behaviors aligning. There is a change in behaviors to be more harmonious with others and more helpful. Negative or destructive behaviors diminish and are replaced by more citizenship behaviors characterized by helping, supporting, and taking initiative outside of formally defined responsibilities. One practitioner described success as:

...a completely changed organization. They're operating with assurance, they're listening much better to the people that they serve... the nature of the way they're doing projects is much more collaborative and their relationships with the rest of the system are much, much stronger.

Also, the change accelerates. Physical movement picks up in a systemic fashion. Individuals move with fewer words; conversations shift from “why” to “how.” The acceleration is a fluid phenomenon in that it is like watching a school of fish quickly changing direction in unison. Interviewee descriptions suggest that the organization is better prepared for change in the future, as if the organization is more change capable. As such, the organization is able to “cut through and accelerate the cycle of change.”

Table 2: Keys to Success

Core Action	Checklist for Success
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Stay true to your values and the values of collaborative work. » Design robust interventions that lead to predictable results. » Connect the whole system through iteratively enlarging the circle of involvement. » State and focus on the purpose and outcomes for each activity. » Guide a dynamic journey that will change as you learn.
Inspiration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Clarify and commit to the cause even when trying something new. » Demonstrate “leaders as authentic champions” through their time, money, staffing, and words. » Utilize the process as an opportunity to coach and develop people experientially. » Build on strengths through discovering moments of success. » Engage the inner child through creative expression such as drawings, skits, music, games, and more. » Use words that matter and familiar terms that people can understand.

improved sales, quality, and profits to reduced waste, turnover, and cycle-time. As one person said, “When you look at a balanced scorecard... we can point to what they are doing today to say this is pivotal, this made a big difference.” A common idea mentioned is characterized by the following: “And the reason I think of them as successes is because they are still alive and well and moving forward and growing and all of that.” In addition, the notion that the organization is still alive and in existence was often stated before talking about typical measures of performance.

Keys to Success

What happened that led to such Amazing Success in these whole system transformations? The practitioners had much to say in which the Keys to Success fell into two main core action dimensions: Implementation and Inspiration. As shown in *Figure 1* and *Table 2*, the Characteristics of Success are presented as outcomes or end-states, while the Keys to Success are presented in verb form as a core action checklist for an Amazing Success (see *Table 2*).

Implementation

The focus of implementation is on the consultant or facilitators of the change process. The interview responses really seemed to focus on the interviewee’s practices and how the change was implemented. In a way, each practitioner described her or his own way of approaching the work. While they mentioned certain methods described by Bunker and Alban (1997) and Holman, Devane, and Cady (2007), these practitioners had a way of internalizing their work and giving it meaning.

One of the first areas to emerge was the notion of values. As one practitioner stated, “know what you really believe in and care about, and put that into life and into your work.” Within this conversation of values arose the idea of being healthy as a person and as a change team. Staying true to values is key to being healthy, centered, and not getting one’s ego in the way of the work with the client. In these instances, modeling of behavior and learning can occur:

Results

In addition to witnessing important psycho-emotional and action oriented shifts, the system experiences or achieves important results. Amazing Success “sets loose unimaginable innovations”; there are the innovative ideas that have been floating around the coffee room and discussed in open forums, yet these ideas seemed to be seen as too risky or subject to poor timing. Some of these ideas get a second life and are embraced and seen as a “proactive” way to realize the vision of the organization. In one organization:

They were able to launch for the first time into the retail market a product that is still incredibly successful today. Prior to that time there was no way they could have. There was no way from a quality perspective they could have done that. So I look at what they have been able to do as far as the results they are creating and the impact they are making both financially and as an organization.

Hence, change “will always result in better initiatives as long as the consultation

process is effective” in which “radically different ideas” emerge that are “out of the box.” In one evaluation, shared by a practitioner, a person in the organization stated, “I just can’t believe how many important ideas emerged as a result of this process.”

Another result of an Amazing Success is that leaders develop, existing leaders turn into better leaders, new leaders emerge, and more people take on information leadership roles. One practitioner described this characteristic as follows:

...a lot of the people who were part of the team that we put together in the beginning went on to become leaders and executives, and in fact, there was one of the high potential (employees), who was involved in the initial study of the company’s best practices, and he, eight or ten years later, became the president of the organization. He, in his kind of acceptance speech, talking about how he became president, really talked about... his early days when everybody was working together to create the future.

There are also tangible or objective targets that are achieved. These are results from

And, we were really paying attention to the ebb and flow of the emotional roller-coaster that was going on all around us, and so it was a good lesson in working collaboratively and in many ways we were, as a small team, modeling a different way of working for the larger community.

The following two example comments emphasized self-awareness as an important aspect of health. The first practitioner stated:

I'm kind of a self-appointed "Joan of Arc" who'll come in and save the little people. So, I have to be aware of the bias... I have to be on guard because I can get protective around the little people or the worker bees... so I learned, re-learned that lesson about vigilance, about my own biases creeping into... influencing my perceptions.

The second person shared a question:

How do we stay conscious about our own readiness to make projections and I guess take a look deeper and really how to stay effective in managing our boundaries with our clients?

Designing robust interventions means that the techniques used, events designed, and activities planned lead to predictable results like those described in the Characteristics of Success. In order to achieve such results, it is important for interventions to be based on solid experience, grounded in sound theory and research, and drawn from best practices in the field. As one practitioner said, we are "creating a new field of organizational transformation and you need to be able to talk about it, the theory as well as the practice of it." The more robust the intervention, the more predictable it is and the more resilient it is to violations of its basic design assumptions. There were stories told of moments where the client or members of the design team were afraid that a process might not work. Invariably, in these moments, the practitioner would tell the client to "trust the process."

What may appear intuitively obvious

to those of us in the field of WSCC, connecting the whole system is a must for a successful implementation. There is a subtlety that is represented by the following comment:

The fewer people you have involved in a change, the easier it is to get a decision. So, the fewer the people, the faster you can go... The more people you have involved the more diversity of thinking you have, the more questions people can ask, the more things for people to think of... You cannot possibly be aware of all of the factors to be considered when designing a new system. So, what you have to do is you have to say, okay here is the process and here is the change we want to make and what are the implications? You ask the people who have the knowledge and sometimes you have to go kind of low to do that because quite honestly high-level leaders should not have that kind of information.

Various practitioners described the ways they get people in the system to see a bit further than they ordinarily see. The practitioners ask questions like, "who else might need to be involved?" As the leaders and others involved in designing the journey (e.g., change team or steering committee) think more systemically, they begin to see the whole system and the perceived boundaries of the system broaden. The result is the involvement of "a critical mass of employees at every level" and beyond.

In today's society we hear a lot about "focus" but what do we need to focus on in our field? Focus on the purpose that is directed toward the impending journey. That focus should answer, "How will the system be different as a result of going through this process?" In the words of two interviewees: "I think the things we know about large-scale change is you need a clear purpose"; and "We don't just go out every day, and say, oh, I'd like to create change, because change for change's sake is really quite foolish." As those people involved in designing the change journey discuss what they believe is the purpose, divergent

thoughts are shared and common threads are identified. Developing a common purpose for the change connects those designing the journey and ensures that key people are on the same page.

There were some interviewees that shied away from discussing a concrete journey and there were others that were very clear about a process. The common theme that did emerge here is that the change journey is dynamic and balances structure with the unpredictable nature of change, thereby allowing self-organization to unfold. As one interviewee put it:

It would seem reasonable to expect that the basic function of any well functioning self organizing system is to be constantly transforming. Isn't that interesting? So, how do you create the conditions under which that can occur?

Consider the following example:

So that was our three days and at the end of the second day, one of the things we did, was have the design team get together with us at the end of the day on each day and tell us—so, what do you see, what's the reaction, and is there anything we need to adjust or change to understand better? At the end of the 2nd day they said yeah, I think we're heading for some trouble here... we need to go back and redo a section. Of course I wouldn't have known that because there are too many people to keep track of. So, we listened carefully to them and then we went back after everybody left and sat down and redesigned the third day almost completely based on their feedback. It worked really well.

We also noticed that the practitioners were adamant that transformation is more than an event, within that, there were quite a few ideas expressed for managing the journey.

First, keep it simple and do not over design: "it's getting people comfortable with the fact that they are not in charge and that they cannot control it." Design a

journey that is “based on passion, responsibility, the need to work with diversity... to move the process forward.” Use of sample or generic journey maps can help create buy-in because people are looking for some kind of structure.

Second, manage the logistics well by paying attention to the details when executing. Keep in mind, flexibility is possible. As one person stated, “it was an excellent lesson in tight—loose, being clear and disciplined in our design and yet fluid to move with whatever arose over the course of the experience.”

Third, adapt the design to the unique qualities of the system and innovate along the way through the use of action learning. What did we plan, what happened, what did we learn, and what do we do next? Review the learning after each step and use that information for the next step or even the next day’s event.

Inspiration

We chose inspiration to characterize the next node under Keys to Success because these themes focused on stimulating the mind and emotions in order to heighten feelings and actions. One important key is to clarify and commit to the cause. Often, the practitioner would describe how the people in the organization believed in the mission and were truly committed to serving their constituents. This commitment set the stage for people to be open to new ways of thinking and to try something new. As one person said:

Yeah, and actually it was one of the things that we un-uncovered. When we did the work with him... many of the people who worked in this organization were 20-30 year employees and they cared deeply about the people they served... and really were looking for a way to reconnect with that original commitment that they had made to this aspect of something they felt very proud of.

While people need to be committed to a cause, it is vital that the leaders champion the change authentically. This includes

taking risks by providing the necessary resources (e.g., money and personnel) and time away from daily work duties (e.g., to attend meetings, benchmarking visits, or a system-wide planning event). When these things are supported, people in the organization take notice and begin to believe that the change itself is an important priority. The result can be seen in the following comment:

I think that was critical but I think it was the impact of leadership showing up and the result of how it triggered employee enrollment and engagement. I mean for me the aha was WOW, if leadership really can understand the core essence of what they can provide, it’s amazing how they can manage and I don’t know whether I really want to use the word control. The conditions that allow the people to step up and realize their potential, it’s incredible, and for me, that’s what was amazing. You know the trigger and really the power, if used appropriately, leadership has in opening up their organizations.

Further, authentic leadership involves being role models. Consider the following comment:

Breakthroughs are huge and most of the breakthroughs are about individual leaders recognizing and understanding their strengths and weaknesses, what their leadership approach and style is all about and how it impacts the organization. It’s about helping them understand from a values and vision perspective the way that their behavior shows up and how important it is to model that to the organization.

And, when leaders show up, speak their truth, and allow themselves to be vulnerable, there can be a powerful shift that occurs across the organization as demonstrated in the following example:

...one of the executives approached the room in the wrong way (despite

some serious coaching beforehand), and eventually came back and apologized, which was a first for (the organization) on that sort of scale. The effect that incident still has on the corporation today is not to be underestimated... the thing just swung around. When he came back and apologized, news of the event spread like wildfire.

Another important activity emphasized is that of coaching and developing the people involved in the process, particularly leaders as exemplified by the following statement:

...it’s all really about setting the stage with leadership, helping them understand what whole system change is about, what leadership is about in orchestrating and pulling together the pieces of a systemic change not only for the organization but helping them understand what the change will exact from them in personal change. They will need to confront their own personal issues alongside the organization issues or else it won’t be successful.

It was consistently mentioned in the interviews that there is a tendency for groups to focus on problems and to get mired in negativity or blame. Practitioners described how it was more effective to build on the strengths of the organization by focusing on moments where things worked well and people felt energized. A client of one practitioner said:

You know... there are a lot of consultants that we... hire that I would say... work on the downside. They would want to know about our problems and they want to help us fix our problems. You work on the upside. You want to help us create our future and be the best we can be.

There was another intriguing theme of engaging the inner child through play. This was seen in activities that involved the use of drawings, skits, poetry, and songs. One

practitioner described an impactful experience as follows:

...we asked people to make presentations about their dreams; we suggested to them with a little bit of trepidation, that they take the opportunity to present their dreams (in a creative way). We wondered what these folks would do. Well... they were creative, artistic, funny, and full of energy. We allowed two hours. It took four hours. Every group had something to say. People were having such a good time we just couldn't cut it short... People talked about it a lot at the end. They didn't know that their colleagues were so much fun, they had no idea... [of] some folks who've worked there for 10 years. They really appreciated the sense of humor that people brought to what everybody assumed was such a grim time in the organization's life. It really unleashed a lot of creativity and frankly it had a real team building aspect to it...

Finally, a consistent theme that emerged was that words matter. There was an emphasis on how words can set the tone, take a group deeper, and lead to important paradigm shifts. Words take the form of questions, statements of noticing, key jargon, etc. Consider the following example provided by a practitioner when reflecting on questions:

Well, yeah! The first question we asked when people first walked in the room before they even finished getting their coffee was, we asked everybody to pair up and sit down and talk to each other for ten minutes and then switch and talk to the other guy. The question was tell me about a time when you felt most excited (or) most connected... with the (organization). The room just exploded...

Words also mattered in forming consensus among the people in the system. When people saw their words become part of important documentation (mission, vision,

goals, values, etc.), they really felt heard and even more so, they believed that they were co-creators of the future.

Key Takeaways

By looking across various WSCC methods, we are better able to understand the common ground that exists. This article is a starting point for future examination in three areas. First, the themes that emerged in this study can be further confirmed through qualitative techniques based on a panel of raters reviewing additional interviews. Second, the findings here can be linked to findings and theories from other disciplines. Finally, the model presented here lends itself to quantitative studies and other more deductive approaches. The aim of this study was to clarify and uncover the expertise that exists in the lived experience of the WSCC practitioner. Our hope is that the framework presented will provide guidance to practitioners and scholars as the field of WSCC methods continues to grow and take shape.

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Steven Cady, PhD, is a Graduate Faculty member at Bowling Green State University where he serves as Director of the Institute for Organizational Effectiveness. He has also served as Director of the Master of Organization Development Program and the Chief Editor for the *Organization Development Journal*. He is heading the NEXUS4change Initiative that is building a community of communities for collaborative methods. He can be reached at steve@stevecady.com.

Kimberly Fleshman earned her Master's in Organization Development from Bowling Green State University. She is currently the manager of the Academic Resource Center where she utilizes the skills from her degree to help faculty and students with implementing technology in the classroom as well as online usage. She can be reached at kflesh@bgsu.edu.

“We know that achieving a significant shift in culture requires a special ‘magic.’ The OD initiative must be well planned yet open to constant adjustment, and designed to motivate people to embrace change.”

Discovering the Magic of Culture Shifts

A Case Study in Large Scale Culture Transformation

By Beverley Patwell,
Donna Gray, and
Steve Kanellakos

Between 2007 and 2010, the City of Ottawa, in the Province of Ontario, Canada, successfully developed and implemented a strategy to help foster a culture of Service Excellence (SE) throughout all city services and operations. Serving as the primary team leading this effort, we were the Director of OD and Performance (Gray), the Deputy City Manager for Operations (Kanellakos), and an external consultant (Patwell). Given that more than 70% of large-scale organizational change initiatives fail, this case study offers some valuable insights that can help OD professionals become more successful leading and managing change initiatives.

We know that achieving a significant shift in culture requires a special “magic.” The OD initiative must be well planned yet open to constant adjustment, and designed to motivate people to embrace change. Leaders, managers, and employees need to be highly committed and must learn to work in alignment with each other, understanding and practicing the same vision and organizational values.

We discovered that the special magic of culture change lies in perceiving it not as a single transformation but rather as a series of small shifts occurring over time among the many groups of stakeholders. In this article, we will share our story, focusing not on the theoretical underpinnings of our design but on the practical steps we took to create a positive environment for change, to develop leaders and managers, and to motivate every city employee to adopt the mindset and practices of SE. We will provide a model of

Service Excellence, a description of several innovative approaches we implemented to drive many culture shifts, and a discussion of the evaluation framework we established to assess the impact. These strategies can be incorporated into any organization’s change journey that requires the engagement and collaboration of a critical mass of employees.

The Background

In 2001, the new City of Ottawa was created through an amalgamation of 11 local municipalities. The enlarged municipality now counts 912,000 residents and employs more than 19,000. Ottawa is one of the most distinctive and successful cities in Canada.

Because of its rapid population growth, and due to public pressures to be more accountable, cost effective, and responsive to its citizens’ needs, the City’s Council embarked in early 2007 on developing a strategy to implement the concept of SE into all its functions and operations. Senior city managers began by conducting benchmarking tours and researching best practices in SE among both public and private sector organizations and internally to help shape their plans.

Creating a Service Excellence Model

The Service Excellence Framework is based on the work of Heintzman and Marson’s (2005) public sector value chain. In essence, this concept posits that a public sector service delivery organization can

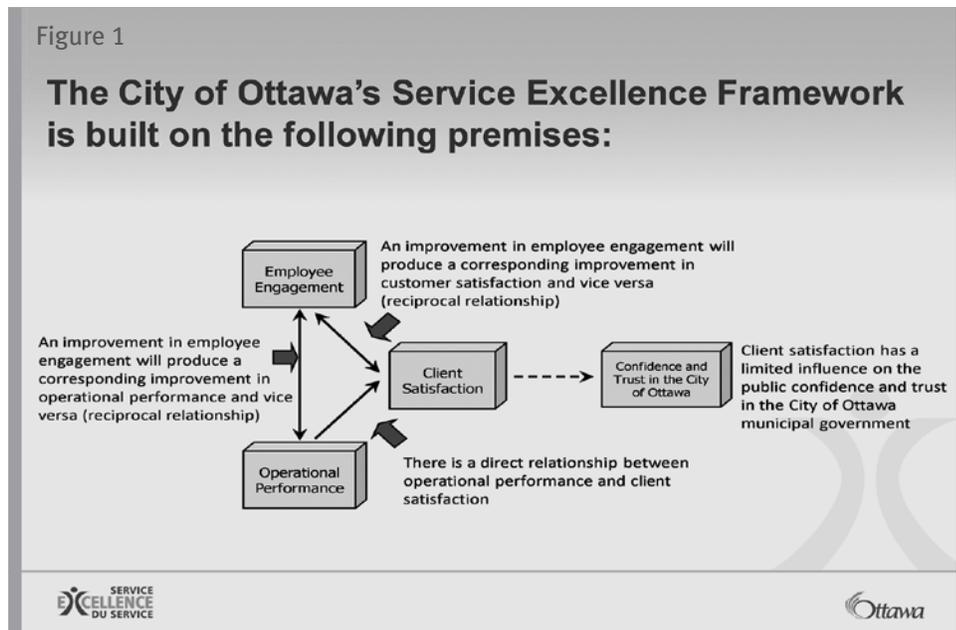
develop and implement a broad strategy to ensure that the people who use government services are satisfied with those services, and that the employees who deliver those services are highly engaged in their work. SE is effectively a commitment to creating a positive employee/customer experience with each and every transaction.

The basic model of Service Excellence in the public sector incorporates three elements: 1) employee engagement + 2) customer satisfaction that leads to 3) trust and confidence. The City of Ottawa modified this model by adding “operational excellence” to reflect the realities of municipal government. Their rationale was that if a government does not have the right processes and services, it does not matter how much one invests in training employees or satisfying customers, you cannot truly achieve Service Excellence without operational excellence.

Figure 1 depicts how the City of Ottawa defined its Service Excellence Framework. The diagram shows an interrelationship between the four variables—employee engagement, operational performance, client satisfaction, and confidence and trust in the City of Ottawa—and the premises upon which each one is built.

To improve SE, Heintzman and Marson’s 2005 research demonstrates that there are clear causal and measurable relationships between variables. For example, if you raise employee engagement, it tends to drive higher levels of operational performance and client satisfaction. If you increase operational performance, it boosts employee engagement and client satisfaction. Effectively, the elements of the model reinforce each other. Improving any one factor creates a positive feedback loop lifting the other variables and becoming a “virtuous circle.” Once you get the cycle going, the work to increase and sustain overall SE becomes easier. Thus, to improve SE, the following steps can be taken:

- » Identify the drivers that influence each of the variables of the value chain.
- » Measure each of the drivers to determine a baseline.
- » Identify improvement strategies and



- » prioritize them based on quantitative measurement of the drivers.
- » Implement the improvement strategies, resulting in service improvement results.
- » Maintain a continual approach and measurement strategy to create sustained change.

Sensitivity to Initial Conditions

As we evaluated the steps to implement SE in Ottawa, it was clear that the culture shift would require extensive leadership buy-in and employee engagement. This would entail a large-scale organizational realignment, including restructuring jobs and roles, redefining the role of leadership, and raising employee engagement at all levels. We had to shift the city’s culture so that every employee would have the customer in his or her line of sight.

We were keenly aware that culture change often engenders resistance. We would need to create a strong perception of authenticity and transparency to ensure that people accepted SE as more than just an OD or HR training exercise. We had to embed the concepts of SE into the city government culture to make it sustainable over the long-term.

We also had to show sensitivity to the existing organizational context. City of Ottawa employees already had a high

level of pride in their work. They regarded themselves as providing quality service, especially given the sometimes conflicting politics of government and the tight restrictions they faced on budgets, resources, and available technology. We had to engage employees in adopting the concepts of SE while honoring and building on their pride for their work and previous successes.

Another challenge we faced was that the City government was large and diverse. Operations were spread out amongst 18 branches and shared services. To account for the tremendous variations among them in function and character, we realized that one of our guiding principles had to be that we could not universally define SE for every branch. Each one needed to understand and implement SE according to the nature of its work and its customers.

Developing a Roadmap

Given that the City’s Executive Council and Senior Management Committee had been involved in developing the SE model, most senior City Managers were already conversant with the concepts of SE. Our first goal was, therefore, to extend awareness of SE down to the city’s middle (line) managers. We began by conducting a one-day Managers Forum involving more than 300 department managers. This was the first time this

level of management had an opportunity to speak with the senior City Managers about SE. We designed the event to maximize dialogue, giving department managers ample opportunity to ask questions about what SE would mean in the context of their own work.

We then asked the managers to return to their teams to discuss SE and begin thinking about their own definition of it and how it might impact their departments and clients. They were not asked to begin making any changes, simply to envision what shape SE would take in their departments. In the context of our theory on the magic of culture shifts, this Managers Forum represented the first small but necessary shift.

Using feedback from senior and middle managers, we next devised an 18-month roadmap, *City of Ottawa Service Excellence Implementation Plan*, breaking down our plans into concrete steps and key milestones. The document included a timeline, a list of deliverables, and a preliminary division of responsibilities from mid-2008 through the end of 2009. The main elements of our roadmap were as follows:

- » Gather both quantitative and qualitative data that would help us develop a clear picture of the current performance levels for each of the four components of the SE framework. We would use surveys and interviews to collect the data.
- » Involve managers and employees in the analysis of the data and then in the creation and implementation of specific improvement plans. This decision reflected our conviction that every branch of government had to define its own goals for SE in the context of its current operations.
- » Distinguish between corporate-wide and departmental improvement efforts. This was likewise an important factor in our sensitivity to initial conditions because implementing SE could not result in holding city employees responsible for improvements beyond their control. We needed to draw a bright line between what SE entailed at the corporate level versus what it would mean for each department.

- » Design improvement projects using an iterative and incremental approach. This decision reflected again our sense that culture shifts require many small movements among stakeholders across the 18 branches. We would need to orchestrate numerous efforts simultaneously, each operating independently at its own speed. This led us to recognize that we had to begin assembling a larger group of Organizational Development (OD) professionals to act as internal consultants, coaches, facilitators, and a task force who would work closely with branches and departments to help coordinate the SE efforts.
- » Provide a coordinating mechanism through the Organizational Development and Performance group (ODP) to bring data from all initiatives together and create a unified strategy and evaluation process.

Leadership Development

While 2008 was spent on building awareness of SE, we devoted much of 2009 to leadership development. We first conducted several Senior Management Committee (SMC) retreats to help us create a focused leadership development strategy to guide the development of the City's Branch General Managers, Shared Service Directors, Department Managers and front line Supervisors. From their feedback, we soon rolled out dedicated initiatives to train each level of management and engage them in SE planning exercises. The following highlight some of the key workshops we held:

- » **Managers Forums**—While the first round of manager forums in 2008 involved 300 department managers, this next round targeted 500. The goal, this time, was to provide updates on the SE strategy and obtain their input for next steps. Some of the educational components of the forums included: two workshops conducted by Disney focused on the "Customer Experience"; panel presentations and discussions focused on internal and external best SE practices; dialogue sessions between the Senior Managers and department

managers on what it takes to advance SE in the City; and presentations about internal SE stories that allowed managers to begin celebrating successes already achieved.

- » **Supervisor Symposiums**—Addressing front line supervisors was a critical component of our leadership development strategy. In the city's history, supervisors had never previously been trained or brought together in a collaborative effort, yet they were responsible for managing employees and the customer experience on a day-to-day basis. Their engagement in SE was critical. As a result, we conducted a series of symposiums that ultimately touched nearly 1,500 supervisors. These helped establish a constructive new dynamic among supervisors, even inspiring them to form their own collaborative network to share experiences and ideas, thus breaking down some of the silos that existed among the many city departments.
- » **Employee Engagement**—We also created initiatives to engage employees directly in participating in culture change. One of these was a city-wide employee survey we conducted in 2009, which collected data on current practices and solicited their feedback. From those results, we derived numerous insights about employee attitudes, motivations, and concerns that informed the actions we would eventually take to address employees.

The Gallery Walk

Following the SMC retreats in 2009, we asked all 18 Branch General Managers and Shared Service Directors to develop a 3-year Service Excellence Plan as part of their operational planning process. This reflected again our notion that each branch had to define SE on its own terms. In 2010, they began launching their plans.

However, like most senior management teams, the SMC was challenged to create a shared understanding about SE plans, transfer knowledge, and identify mutual needs and interdependencies so they could more effectively achieve the

organization's vision and goals. It is not uncommon in times of change for people at executive levels to struggle with how much of their strategic plans to disclose to peers and superiors due to political and power conflicts, or wanting to protect their limited resources of people, time, and budget.

To address this challenge, we designed an event we called the "Gallery Walk" whose purpose was to encourage the SMC members to openly communicate their SE plans to each other and share innovative ideas among their peers. We took the 18 SE plans, enlarged them to poster size, and hung them on the walls like artwork in a gallery. We then invited the General Managers to walk around the room in silence, reviewing each plan, and writing their feedback—questions, suggestions, recommendations—right on the posters. Each GM then gave a brief presentation about their plan and addressed the feedback written on the posters from their peers.

The process surfaced, in a very natural way, the many synergies and common challenges experienced by the GMs and reinforced the value of collaboration and knowledge sharing. Interestingly, it also highlighted how different each branch was in their SE process, concretely demonstrating that not everyone can be at the same place in devising or implementing their plan. But the general outcome was very positive. All branches were making progress towards their SE goals; culture shifts were underway in many places. Overall, the event proved to be a constructive experience that added synergy to the GMs' planning and implementations in a unique, engaging, and productive way.

The SE Leads Program

While the SE plans were being implemented in 2010, we recognized that department managers would need extensive advice and consulting as they put new practices into place. To accommodate this, one of the core strategies we created was the "SE Leads Program." The program sought to create a cadre of 55 "team leads," selected from throughout the city, who would be

responsible for interpreting and leading the SE implementation plan in their branch or service area. We designed a training program to build on the participants' prior experiences and backgrounds, while providing them with new tools, techniques, and processes to strengthen their leadership competencies. The SE Leads learned how to "coach and influence upwards" so they could feel comfortable speaking with supervisors and General Managers about how their departments were moving forward with their SE plans.

One fundamental principle we followed in the SE Leads Program was to "use work, not make work." We wanted participants to learn in real time, using their actual work assignments as the anchor for their training and development. To do this, we created three special assignments for the SE Leads:

» **Individual SE Project:** We asked the Leads to identify and work on a SE project of their own choice. The projects had to be within their span of control and aligned with their overall branch or departmental SE plan. Participants were invited to draw on the resources of other SE Leads to help shape and advance their projects. At the conclusion of the assignment, we asked them to report on their accomplishments. In December 2010, the 55 SE Leads presented 22 SE projects to Senior Management, who returned unanimous approval. Many of these projects are still ongoing, with some utilizing cross-functional or, in some cases, cross-departmental teams, another confirmation of how we were slowly disrupting silos and making culture shifts happen.

For example, a team from the Public Works Department sought to develop a communications plan to promote SE in their branch. Their goal was to educate both internal employees and the public about the important role that Public Works provides for residents and visitors to the city. In planning their project, they realized they could benefit by involving the city's communications group, IT, OD, and several other departments. They put together a shared

action plan to collaborate, and piloted their idea on Canada Day. They gave cameras to all Public Works employees and asked them to capture "A Day in the Life of Public Works" by photographing themselves doing their jobs that day. The photos were collected and turned into a video, which was shared with all SE Leads and internal branches of the city government.

The project spawned many interesting results. It inspired other SE Leads to replicate the idea in their own departments. It also became a model at the corporate level, as city-wide videos about SE improvements and successes were produced. Finally, it taught many managers about what is required to empower and engage their employees.

- » **Service Excellence Field Study:** A second special "use work" project we created for SE Leads was to undertake a field study in which they had "to walk in the shoes of their clients." The goal was to have them experience a city service first-hand, by being "the customer." They were required to take notes during every step of their experience to evaluate the quality of the service, and even to write down their feelings about how they were treated as a client. Many participants discovered real "moments of truth" about the quality of city services. Some Leads were so inspired, they proposed new strategies to create "WOW" moments and eliminate "OW" moments in the client experience.
- » **Friendly Consulting Exercise:** Lastly, we gave SE Leads a third unique exercise based on the work of Henry Mintzberg and the Advanced Leadership Program at McGill University. Called "friendly consulting," the exercise asked teams of Leads to research and analyze a key SE challenge or issue in a department or branch other than their own. They then had to present their observations and recommendations for change in a positive way to the Challenge Champion Team responsible for leading that improvement. The goal was to teach the SE Leads how to use their own knowledge and expertise to provide constructive criticism to their peers. The

exercise stretched them to go beyond their own personal experiences to understand how cultural and systemic issues can impact service excellence across the City.

Following this exercise, many SE Leads achieved a significant breakthrough, a sort of epiphany, in their understanding of culture change that aligned them with the SE philosophy and strategic approach. When we asked them to reflect on the common themes and patterns that emerged across the City, the SE Leads recognized that many departments shared common challenges. The importance of being truly client focused, collaborating, and sharing information as well as valuing teamwork became viscerally evident to them. They recognized that a common formula for success could be applied to every challenge explored.

At the same time, they also saw how positive change was already starting to happen, moving departments towards authentic SE practices. One participant referred to the City as a big tanker ship that takes time to turn around. The transformation happens not all at once, but in small movements that eventually alter the direction. It takes the efforts of many people to make these shifts, and they must happen at the right time and in the right sequence. As the SE Leads concluded, if we look at change this way, it becomes less threatening, less overwhelming, and more purposeful, powerful, magical, and rewarding.

These exercises, reflections, and checkpoint meetings began bridging the gap that had existed between senior city leaders and their employees. The SE Leads became far more effective in mobilizing the efforts of their departments to adopt the SE practices and keep progress moving forward.

Our Evaluation Framework

It is difficult to evaluate complex change. There are many OD models available to assess programs, but most address *planned* change. They fail to take into account *emergent* change. We designed the SE Leads Program Evaluation process to evaluate both.

Our model is built on the foundations of Donald Kirkpatrick's Four Levels to evaluate learning and training programs (1993) and the elements of Classical and Postmodern OD as described by Gervase Bushe and Robert Marshak (2008). Since we were working on shifting culture, we especially wanted to reflect on and evaluate learning as it showed up in the emergent changes throughout the SE Leads program. We therefore built into our evaluation methodology numerous "snapshots" and "milestones" that would allow us to assess what everyone was learning at a given moment in time. Our Evaluation Framework was thus comprised of assessing three overarching areas:

- » **Vision, Context, Goals and Objectives** – Our model took into account vision and context as well as goals and objectives. Many evaluations focus only on goals and objectives in the form of cost savings and outcomes, using quantitative data that all departments map into their business strategies. But this fails to examine progress towards the purpose—the overarching vision and context for the project. This requires qualitative data. For this reason, we periodically interviewed the SE Leads and asked them to describe in words how their departments and branches were going beyond a basic understanding of the meaning of SE to truly integrating the framework, mindset, and practices in their daily work. This evaluation helped us assess the strength of the real culture shift that was underway.
- » **Personal Learning and Insights**—At the beginning of the individual SE projects, many of the Leads automatically designed their projects using a classical planned change approach. They identified a start and finish date and defined a fixed outcome they wanted to achieve. However, they soon realized that they had to adapt or even alter their plans due to emerging circumstances and events as they arose. Throughout the SE Lead Workshops and other leadership activities, they learned how to adjust their personal leadership approach and redesign their plans, often requiring the collaboration and inclusiveness of other

stakeholders, groups, and connections with other departments to gain more impact. To measure their progress, we asked them to complete an open-ended written exercise called the *SE Leads Reflections on Fostering a Culture of Service Excellence*, where they had to comment on their personal learning journey. This self-reflection process proved invaluable in raising their confidence and boosting their insights into how to better lead and manage their SE projects.

- » **Relationships and Community**—This element in our evaluation strategy was critical to the success of the entire project. Since one of our key objectives was to build more effective working relationships and a network of SE Leads across the City, we decided to assess the strength of their community and the connections between them. We did this using formal techniques such as evaluation surveys, but we also used informal techniques such as tapping into the feedback we received about how well the SE Leads bonded and shared knowledge during the group discussions they had in their learning clusters where they used modules from *CoachingOurselves*, a management and leadership development process created by Henry Mintzberg and Phil LeNir. In the end, we were pleasantly surprised to find that the SE Leads had formed a very close community, with 100% of them volunteering to continue their role in the coming years as mentors for the next group of SE Leads.

All three of these evaluation techniques were heavily weighted toward encouraging reflection and conducting strategic conversations with the SE Leads to assess the effectiveness and impact of their actions. The key influence on our evaluation framework was the work of Mintzberg, who emphasizes that what counts in the aftermath of a Learning and Development initiative is *impact*. In other words, does the learning of those who are trained transfer back into the organization beyond the manager participating in a session.

This philosophy inspired us to frequently seek to capture the impacts that would help us better gauge the effectiveness of our process and the inside story of culture change. The other influence comes from Beverley Patwell and Edith Whitfield Seashore who describe the influence of the choices leaders make in their Use of Self and the ripple impact they can have on teams and the organization.

Results of the SE Strategy

In the course of three years, from 2007 to the end of 2010, we witnessed a profound and quantifiable transformation in city services due to the implementation of SE. The list of individual corporate and departmental SE accomplishments is extensive and would take pages to detail.

More importantly, culture change at the department level has been extraordinary. To date, the SE modifications speak to a wide variety of activities that have heightened employee engagement and the quality of decision making that impacts customers. We have seen more than 200 efficiency initiatives accomplished to date, many emphasizing new efforts at automation. There are also new employee recognition programs based on service excellence.

Of special note, silos are coming down; we are seeing far more joint meetings across city departments, and more effective and strategic working relationships that had not existed before. There are new communication efforts among departments to share client experiences. The client is now on the radar of every department. Every employee understands their “line of sight” and individual impact on the citizen’s experience. And many departments are still in the midst of implementing follow-on plans that will make even more changes.

Our Key Insights about Culture Shift

Most people are fearful and resist organizational culture change. This case study explains the process and strategies that we took to understand the City of Ottawa’s culture and the pride that its employees have about working there. This foundation helped us, as the OD team, to understand

what was sacred about the organization’s values and culture, but it also pointed out clearly what operations and attitudes had to change. If we had to list takeaways and key insights in our process, we would identify the following:

1. **Think in Terms of Small Shifts**—Rather than attempting to use brute force to implement a sudden transformation in the work styles and attitudes of city employees, we chose to frame the process as a series of small but steady culture shifts. Combined, these eventually created momentum and synergy, leading to a profound and sustainable change in the entire culture.

Rather than attempting to use brute force to implement a sudden transformation in the work styles and attitudes of city employees, we chose to frame the process as a series of small but steady culture shifts. Combined, these eventually created momentum and synergy, leading to a profound and sustainable change in the entire culture.

2. **Strong Focus on Leadership Development** – Our team focused heavily on leadership development for an entire year before embarking on the specific elements of the change initiative. We created a strong framework and process to educate and orient the city’s senior executives, Branch General Managers, and Shared Service Directors around the concepts of SE. As leaders, they were responsible for introducing SE in their branches and departments and overseeing corporate and departmental SE plans. Obtaining their buy-in and commitment to change was a major factor in our success.

3. **Strong Project Management**—Our team adhered to a rigorous top-down project management philosophy by creating specific plans, timelines, and firm milestones to introduce SE to all stakeholders in the city. We insisted on adherence to honor corporate and departmental commitments to SE so as to keep the action moving forward. This strategic decision proved invaluable in

overcoming resistance to change while maintaining focus, continuity and the momentum necessary for large-scale, complex systemic change.

4. **Recognition of the Importance of Knowledge Transfer**—We recognized that in large-scale transformations, it is vital to use the knowledge of the few to impact the many. Our strategic roadmap included many learning initiatives—workshops, retreats, symposiums—aimed at relaying information about SE to every level of management and staff. Other initiatives were supported with coaching and mentoring to develop a critical mass of leaders who

could manage the SE implementation in their departments. The 50 SE Leads proved to be key resources and motivators, helping department managers interpret and create new SE practices quickly and purposefully.

5. **Focus on Building Community**—Many elements in our strategic planning process were aimed at building a community around SE. We needed to encourage people to network and share challenges, knowledge, and success stories that would ultimately help them to complete the tasks required for their SE plans. One of our most significant victories in this regard was being able to finally break down silos among departments in the city and create a shared understanding of the teamwork required to implement SE across the city and across functions.

6. **Commitment to “Use Work, Not Make Work”**—An important element in the success and rapidity of the effort was our decision to “use work, not make work.” In all of our awareness forums

and training workshops, we had leaders, managers, and SE Leads use their actual work experiences to identify successful SE experiences, gaps, and improvement strategies rather than working on a hypothetical or textbook situation. This kept their work real and meaningful.

7. **Emphasis on Continuous Evaluation and Impact**—We sought to rethink and develop new OD evaluation practices that would take into account not just planned but emergent changes and adaptations. One reason for this was our conviction that we could not force everyone in a large organization to accomplish change at the same pace. We had to create ongoing feedback mechanisms that allowed us to constantly measure results, keep track of themes and patterns that emerged, and make new recommendations as needed. A second reason was that we believed it was vital to constantly measure the quantifiable and qualitative impact that these initiatives were having on the culture.
8. **Use of Internal and External OD Consultants**—Because of the size of the organization, we recognized that we had to augment the original staff of 6 OD internal consultants with nearly 20 new consultants who were hired to assist with coaching and training managers and departmental staff. We trained these new consultants as part of the SE Leads program so they were learning simultaneously with the SE Leads and department managers. This proved invaluable in that the OD consultants developed a strong shared sense of the challenges everyone faced, which helped them become accepted and respected advisors to the departments working alongside the SE Leads.
9. **A Long-term Shared Vision**—Right from the start of our effort, we recognized that culture change requires a long-term commitment. We were patient, yet steadfast in our dedication to see the change through. In the first year, we focused on creating alignment and a common vision of SE with the

Beverley Patwell, MA, CHRP, is President of Patwell Consulting Inc. She is an organizational development practitioner with over 25 years experience. In addition to her consulting practice she teaches in Mendoza College's Executive Leadership Program at the University of Notre Dame and American University's Masters in Organizational Development. She is an associate coach with the Niagara Institute and co-author with Edith Whitfield Seashore, of *Triple Impact Coaching: Use of Self in the Coaching Process*. She can be reached at bpowell@patwellconsulting.com.

Steve Kanellakos, MPA, is the Deputy City Manager of City Operations at the City of Ottawa. In this role, he is responsible for Community and Social Services, Emergency and Protective Services, Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services, Public Works, Public Health, Corporate Communications, Human Resources, Information Technology Services, and Organizational Development and Performance. He can be reached at Steve.kanellakos@ottawa.ca.

Donna Gray, Director of Organizational Development and Performance Department at the City of Ottawa, has over 19 years of experience with the City of Ottawa and is responsible for organizational development, corporate planning, performance management, corporate policy administration, strategic community and client initiatives, corporate project management, and the corporate implementation of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. She oversees the delivery of services to citizens through the 311 Contact Centre and the seven Client Service Centres. She can be reached at Donna.gray@ottawa.ca.

Senior Leadership team. Following this process, we created a strong SE leadership development strategy and roadmap for the coming years. This strategy included SE plans comprised of many initiatives to take place over three years. We directed our efforts at every level of management (executive, middle, and line supervisors) as well as employees. As stated earlier, we did not impose this vision in a fixed form on the many stakeholders involved. We asked each department to discover and interpret SE in their own context, shifting its practices relative to their own functions and at their own pace. In many ways, the effort was both top-down and bottom up, yet sharing the same overall long-term vision of a new culture.

We believe our process is transferable to any organization that needs to build employee engagement, and deeply understand their culture to achieve success. Ottawa is now benefitting from a highly engaged city government workforce that goes to great lengths to satisfy its citizens

who utilize thousands of city services day after day. The culture shift is evident and palpable. In the world of OD, it would be hard to ask for a better result.

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Extending the Conversation

Examining Culture Change through the Lens of Interim Leadership

By Blair Browning and Suzanne Boys

In the early 1980s, management gurus (i.e., Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Ouchi, 1981; Peters & Waterman, 1982) claimed that an organization’s success was contingent on the existence of a strong organizational culture. The implication was that organizational culture is something an organization has, and can thus be imported, created, and managed. These writers, among others, went so far as to recommend particular cultural forms for success. As such, organizational culture was conceptualized as a managerial achievement. Although academics have largely bypassed such prescriptive notions of organizational culture in favor of descriptive approaches, manager-leaders continue to treat organizational culture as a strategic accomplishment (Fairhurst, 2007).

This becomes especially evident in organizations undergoing strategic (i.e., managerially-driven) culture changes (Bouchikhi & Kimberly, 2003). During such periods of corporate reinvention, leaders make substantive changes to the organization’s ideology, which leads to changes in strategy, operations, and artifacts. Each of these changes is designed to reshape the organization’s culture. Schein (2010) described the important connection between culture and leadership, “culture is ultimately created, embedded, evolved, and ultimately manipulated by leaders” (p. 3).

Strategic culture change can be an ambiguous process and was recently addressed by Marshak and Grant (2011) who noted the important role that discourse plays in change environments and stated that “changing the conversation

leads to organizational change” (p. 2). They highlighted the fact that there are multiple levels of linked discourse that impact a change situation: intrapersonal, interpersonal, interpersonal and group, organizational, and socio-cultural. Likewise Martin (2002) states that if culture consists of “in-depth, subjective interpretations of a wide range of cultural manifestations,” researchers should look for how the meanings of cultural manifestations are linked together.

Discursive leadership is a branch of leadership research which is “heavily oriented toward discourse and communication” (Fairhurst, 2007, p. 3). Language creates meaning and consequently, the power of discourse is evident in the shaping and re-shaping of organizational culture. This focus on dialogue highlights the ways in which leadership is communicatively enacted. From this perspective, “Leadership is exercised when ideas expressed in talk or action are recognized by others as capable of progressing tasks or problems which are important to them” (Robinson, 2001, p. 93). Yet we also know that it is not solely the message, but also the messenger who plays a key role in culture change.

Since strategic culture change is perceived by practitioners as a managerial function, it serves as a backdrop against which we can study leadership itself. In the current study, the dynamic process of a strategic organizational change draws our focus to a university in the midst of a culture shift. Certainly, leadership is at the forefront of reengineering efforts for any organization. The following study assesses the practices and interpretations of 24

university leaders as they navigated a new “Vision” for the university that was created by the school’s president. Shortly after the launch of and some initial resistance to the Vision, the president left the university, yet the school’s Board reaffirmed its support for the ambitious and contentious plan. Some of the core goals within the Vision would undoubtedly alter the identity of the university.

The university leaders in this study had to tread carefully in this delicate organizational culture change as they necessarily had to cater to multiple stakeholders who all believed their voices should be heard. It did not take long before transition in key leadership roles became normalized, and the result of this transition was the appointments of interim leaders. In fact, interims became increasingly common to the point that some noted an “interim culture” had been created. Each of the 24 participants in this study was a leader at the university who had a position ranging from department chair to the president of the university. In other words, these were very integral leadership positions and each of them was serving in an interim capacity.

While interim leadership saturated the university under study, it is also becoming more standardized in the corporate environment. However, despite its increased usage, interim leadership remains an understudied type of research and there are only scant published articles in various disciplines (e.g., Ballinger & Marcel, 2010; Browning & Kassing, 2011; Chapman & Vogelsang, 2005) on this topic. When one considers that the late Steve Jobs was once the interim CEO of Apple, or that other Fortune 500 companies such as Yahoo!, Hewlett-Packard, AMD, and GM have recently had interim CEO’s, it underscores the importance of this study. Considering these trends in organizational practice, it is important to take a closer look at this phenomenon. What follows is a brief background of the university under study, the findings of this case study of a university immersed in interim leadership, and an analysis of what practitioners can learn from this culture shift journey. First, we provide some context for the scene of the study as it is located in a university

undergoing a leader-driven reconstructed organizational culture.

Background of a Culture in Flux

Our research focuses on an institution we are calling Interim U. This medium-size, private university in the United States is affiliated with a particular Protestant denomination. At the heart of this study is a recent shift in Interim U’s traditionally strong organizational culture. Not too long ago, Interim U simultaneously celebrated its sesquicentennial (150th year)

a reprioritization of research over teaching would affect the school’s reputation as an outstanding teaching university as well as what new expectations would be levied on faculty. These fears flagged a resistance to the proposed culture shift from different directions. In response, the president submitted his resignation. He was followed in the next five years by five individuals serving in the presidential role whether that was in an interim, acting, or permanent capacity. Thus, if there are any doubts about whether changing an organizational culture may create some contention and

In describing this period, one former interim provost said, “anytime a college tries to make a transition from basically a college culture to a research university, there are going to be major issues and struggles.” These issues led to a “Family Dialogue,” in which faculty members and thousands of alumni gathered to question the proposed redirection. Despite the president’s resignation and some stakeholder resistance (there was certainly support for the Vision from various constituents, as well), the Board sent out a statement reaffirming the Vision.

and inaugurated only its twelfth president. Shortly thereafter, that president outlined a new “Vision” for the university, which included entering “the top tier of American universities while reaffirming and deepening its distinctive Christian mission.” In discussing the Vision, one journalist noted that “it rejects the notion that ‘intellectual excellence’ and ‘intense faithfulness to the Christian mission’ are mutually exclusive, although it notes that not many universities have been able to do both effectively” (Balmer, 2002).

The Vision met with some resistance as various stakeholders questioned its implications for the university. Some feared that funding the proposed changes would lead Interim U to price itself out of its traditional constituency. Others feared that the Vision, although ostensibly affirming Interim U’s religious heritage, would reroute the school’s driving ideology. There were also concerns about how

resulting leader transition, there is no need to look further than Interim U.

In describing this period, one former interim provost said, “...anytime a college tries to make a transition from basically a college culture to a research university, there are going to be major issues and struggles.” These issues led to a “Family Dialogue,” in which faculty members and thousands of alumni gathered to question the proposed redirection. Despite the president’s resignation and some stakeholder resistance (there was certainly support for the Vision from various constituents, as well), the Board sent out a statement reaffirming the Vision. Its centrality to the new culture is evidenced in how employees talked about it. As one interim chair noted, “It [the Vision] has become an ideology instead of a set of goals. That means we have to say certain things about it; we have to act in a certain way when discussing it. To not do those things is detrimental to

you.” This comment clearly not only shows the Vision’s impact on the beliefs and behavioral norms at Interim U, but also the way a leader must guard their discourse about Interim U.

In some cases, the Vision served as a dividing line among stakeholders. In our interviews, several pre-Vision faculty indicated they felt like second-class citizens in the post-Vision environment. This belief was compounded by a rhetorical misstep by the president when he announced the Vision would help Interim U “attract a world-class faculty.” Though unintentional, the implication that pre-Vision faculty were not world-class and that hopefully Interim U could now attract those individuals, stung. “That comment ticked me off,” said one interviewee. When speaking about the post-Vision culture at Interim U, one upper-level interim administrator said:

You have read that article about Disney [Smith & Eisenberg, 1987] when it moved from the family metaphor to the corporate metaphor? In some ways, that is what some people feared is what the Vision was doing to the institution—it was moving Interim U from the family metaphor to the corporate academic metaphor. It’s all through that we’re losing what it means to be Interim U. We have some fundamental identity questions and I don’t think we have resolved them. The tricky part is that the Vision was the thing that moved us forward, but it was also the thing that divided us.

Clearly, Interim U had been in the midst of a palpable and contested culture shift. During this period of revolving door leadership and cultural reinvention, the university relied heavily on interim leaders at all levels, including provosts, deans, and department heads. The emergence of interim leadership as a cultural norm seems to be an unintended consequence of the turbulent cultural shift. Yet, some may argue that a systemic reliance on interims seems to have emerged as one way to manage (during) the culture change. We explored this

Table 1: Non-strategic Consequences

Consequence	Implication
Negative impact on organizational image	May make hiring more challenging
Uncertainty for employees	May hamper productivity

in our study and highlight the findings in further detail below.

The Study

This study was conducted during the 2008-2009 school year. One of the researchers contacted numerous current and/or former individuals who had served in a leadership position within an interim capacity at Interim U. Twenty-four participants ultimately responded and granted interviews. Of those, 13 were current or former department chairs and 11 were current or former senior administrators. The researchers collaboratively generated an interview schedule, which was used to guide the semi-structured interviews. These conversations were recorded and transcribed.

After independently familiarizing ourselves with the transcripts, both researchers met to discuss each in detail. This process served three purposes. First, it allowed us to connect the “back story” of the organizational culture change with the interview data. Second, it allowed us to identify potential themes across the interviews. Third, it indicated key questions that should guide our data analysis. After this meeting, we individually analyzed the interviews for quotes which illuminated each guiding question. The analysis was an iterative process which moved among transcripts, tentative themes, and emergent findings (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). We ultimately explored two key research questions:

RQ1: How does interim leadership function during a culture change?

RQ2: How do interim leaders interpret their role during a culture change?

These questions allow us to describe the practices and interpretations used by interim leaders in the context of an evolving culture. Before reviewing our findings, we provide discursive evidence that the organization was indeed experiencing a culture change.

How does an Interim Function?

Given the complexity, ambiguity, and contested nature of this situation, we felt it important to begin our analysis by noting how Interim U’s systemic reliance on interim leaders began. As noted, the introduction of the Vision launched a revolving door of leaders at Interim U. Because an unofficial norm restricted interim administrators from naming permanent administrators, and because interims began to pepper upper administration during this time, the interim status soon trickled down throughout the university. This ultimately created what some employees referred to as an interim culture. In one case, a participant noted that his direct line of support looked like this: interim chair (where he was serving) reporting to an interim dean, who reported to the interim provost, who reported to the interim president. He understandably noted, “It was not exactly the model of stability.” Some non-strategic consequences of systemic reliance on interim leadership are listed in *Table 1*.

Interim U’s reliance on interim leaders was not welcomed by everyone, particularly for such key positions. Several interviewees noted that over-reliance on interims had a negative effect on the organization’s image. For example, one interim chair said, “I really think it is going to be tougher and tougher to find a good president for the university from the outside because this is not a good history

Table 2: Interpretive Dichotomies

Emphasizing...	May lead to the following paradox...
Wording of title	“Interim chair” vs. “chair during the interim period”
Import of title	Title as hindrance vs. title as irrelevant
Temporal sense	Role viewed as temporary vs. role viewed as not temporary
Access to authority	Aggressive vs. passive

we have had with these transitions.” The negative image effect was noticed at lower administrative levels as well. A chair whose department was in the midst of its third consecutive year with an interim leader stated:

I think it has had a detrimental effect on the institution’s reputation when for three years in a row it appears they cannot find a suitable chair. That could be interpreted in so many different ways—mostly negative, I would say. For me, it is hard to think of a positive spin you could put on that. It either means that the administration is looking for someone of such quality that rarely exists, or the university or the department is in such disarray that no decisions can be made.

As this leader shows, overreliance on interim leadership may have nonstrategic consequences for an organization’s image and reputation.

Not only did the reliance on interim leadership create a problematic image for the organization and thus potentially affect recruitment, but it also created a sense of uncertainty for employees. As one interim chair said “Interim spots are very difficult and I think the general culture at Interim U right now shows how unnerving those can be. You know, with all of these interim folks, everybody is left questioning things...” The department chair’s comment trailed off, which was indicative of the instability inherent in a culture which relies on interims during a culture change.

As this section has shown, interim leadership has become a (non)strategic

management practice during the ongoing organizational culture change. The next section explores the discursive construction of the interim role. Given the centrality of language to both leadership and culture, we deemed this an important step in understanding how interims interpreted their role during the culture shift.

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How Does an Interim Interpret their Role?

Although Interim U had no officially stated preference for interim leadership, it emerged as a tool for managing the operational and cultural flux of this period. As the Vision impacted employee identification and thus spurred turnover, the university named dozens of interim leaders. This was due to some employees leaving the university, others stepping down from leadership roles, and others simply being replaced as a result of “fit.” However, as a result of instability at the top of the institution (i.e., interim president),

the trickle-down effect of interim leaders being appointed was quickly evident as they saturated the organizational chart. In order to understand the phenomena of interim leadership in the current case, we looked for how participants communicatively constructed their interim role. Across the interviews, four interpretive dichotomies emerged. See *Table 2*.

The first dichotomy hinges on a strategic rewording of the interim title. Although most interviewees named themselves an “Interim XYZ Role,” some referenced a strategic inversion of their titles. For these individuals, their title became “XYZ Role in the Interim.” As one interviewee said, “He [the dean] treated me, although an interim, as the chair for this particular point in time. When we had meetings, there were quite a number of us that were interim and not wanting to say ‘interim chair,’

but ‘chair during this interim time.’” This strategic rephrasing was noted by several participants. Interestingly, each time the inversion was mentioned, it was attributed to a senior member of the organization. That is, the interim leaders never initiated the inverted title. Instead, it was bestowed on them by someone with more authority. In effect, it was a senior leader’s way of empowering the interim signifying the importance of leadership and communication within a culture shift.

The second dichotomy highlights how participants placed differing import on their title. On one hand, some interims

viewed the interim title as a hindrance. For example, one individual exemplified this clearly by saying, “It sort of castrates you a bit... It’s always ‘Are you the chair?’ and I would reply ‘I’m the interim chair’ and they would say, ‘Oh.’” This reaction was not atypical. One upper-level administrator reported a faculty member saying, “I want to speak to the real dean.”

However, the perception of an interim title as a mark of impotence may vary with one’s position. According to a senior level interim, “I think as you move up the organization there is less of that. In my job, it doesn’t matter if I have interim on my tag or not.” He went on to elaborate that the interim title can be more or less relevant depending on the rank, role, or department. It may also be more or less relevant depending on how prevalent interims are in an organization. As one participant noted, “I think the interim tag falls off quicker around here” than at universities that do not rely on interim roles. According to this individual, the tag had become so commonplace at Interim U that it did not inhibit one’s ability to lead.

The third dichotomy linked the ways in which leaders conceptualize the temporal nature of their role. Not surprisingly, many of our participants viewed their interim role as time-bound. For example, one said, “I always felt that I was just occupying the chair for a limited amount of time.” An alternative conceptualization of the role’s temporal nature was offered by a more senior level interim. He noted, “I don’t approach this as temporary... you realize that we are all interim in the long-run so I do not approach this as a ‘temp’.” It is important to note, however, that this reframing may be possible only for senior-level leaders. In fact, he acknowledged that “it’s the office that makes the difference.” For this leader, a role’s hierarchical position trumped its temporal nature.

The fourth dichotomy centered on leaders’ access to authority. One individual captured both ends of this continuum:

I think of kind of two extremes of how you can be an interim. We had an interim president who fires the provost in the first five minutes of his

job. And so, you’ve got that extreme and then you have the interims of whatever level that kind of turn off and on the lights, and they don’t want to do anything [and] truly see this as “I’m maintaining.”

He was essentially critiquing both extremes and was no more in favor of the aggressive interim than he was the passive, caretaking interim. Several telling metaphors came out of the interviews as the interims told contrasting stories that match up well with the aggressive/passive dichotomy. For

When an aggressive interim takes the reins, he/she may want to use this opportunity as a springboard to a more permanent position. Yet, aggressive actions from a temporary role may be marked with resistance and possibly even discord from fellow employees. On the other hand, when a passive interim is in charge and views his/her role as purely one of maintenance, or “steering the ship,” it can lead to a culture of paralysis in which stagnation is the most prevailing attribute.

some, they described their role as “circling the plane,” “turning off and on the lights,” and “placeholders.” Others considered their role with optimism and believed it was leading to something in the future with examples such as “kind of like a dry run,” “the road to the more permanent,” and “the way up.”

Although this is not an exhaustive treatment of how our subjects named or conceptualized their interim roles, it does indicate the connection between how they named the role and how they enacted it. This is important, given the ambiguous nature of interim roles. Naming is clearly an important discursive function for interim leaders, since it allows them to interpret the role.

What Can We Learn from Interim U?

Against the backdrop of Interim U’s historically strong culture and cultural shift, participants described an emergent and wide-spread reliance on interim leadership. Whether the usage of interims in order to

leverage cultural change was a strategic tool for managing the organizational culture is not known, but it was effective in accomplishing the goal. It is difficult to have a strong organizational culture without strong leadership and strong leadership is nearly impossible when hindered by an interim title. Thus, when faced with resistance to the new institutional Vision that Interim U was committed to, instability may have been the perfect strategic vehicle to drive change. Those who wanted to hold onto the former culture no longer held position power at the university, and the

new leaders were operating within temporary roles. Just as the position may have been a “dry run” for the temporary leader, it may have held a similar role for the institution to gauge whether the leader was the right fit for the new culture at Interim U.

One participant summed up the significant transition in the leadership ranks with a sense of relief and of expectation in moving forward: “We just sort of need to get people to think what happened in the past, whether good or bad... our focus needs to be on moving forward. We need a clean break from the permanent people.” The fact that he connected the permanent people to the old culture was perhaps the intended goal through the use of interim leaders. “Moving forward” meant new leadership and though some interims may have merely been pawns in a larger game, these individuals were given the opportunity to lead.

Currently, Interim U maintains its commitment to the Vision, and it has become an ingrained artifact within the institutional culture. While mostly

successful in its attempt to navigate a culture change, Interim U's (over)use of interims did signify some potentially devastating effects of relying on them too heavily.

1. **Instability:** The inherent instability throughout the organization in an environment marked with interim leadership can be both unnerving to current employees and unappealing in its efforts to attract new employees.
2. **Ill effects:** The culture that is created may be marked by its own dichotomy: one of either discord or of paralysis. When an aggressive interim takes the reins, he/she may want to use this opportunity as a springboard to a more permanent position. Yet, aggressive actions from a temporary role may be marked with resistance and possibly even discord from fellow employees. On the other hand, when a passive interim is in charge and views his/her role as purely one of maintenance, or "steering the ship," it can lead to a culture of paralysis in which stagnation is the most prevailing attribute. Obviously, neither of these cultures is desirable, but both are feasible when faced with numerous interim leaders – particularly in the midst of a desired culture change.

The preceding analysis showed that systemic reliance on interim leadership during an organizational culture change is a complex phenomenon. By examining the dialogue of interim leaders during a strategic culture change, we were able to explore the practices and interpretations interims used at Interim U. We encourage further development of this burgeoning research area of interim leaders and particularly their impact on organizational culture.

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Blair W. Browning, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at Baylor University in the Department of Communication Studies. He received his PhD in Organizational Communication from Texas A&M University. Browning teaches courses in Leadership, Small Group Communication, and Conflict and Negotiation within the department and enjoys discussing organizational development concepts with his students and colleagues. He can be reached at Blair_Browning@baylor.edu.

Suzanne E. Boys, PhD, is an Assistant Professor at the University of Cincinnati in the Department of Communication. She received her PhD in Organizational Communication from Texas A&M University. Boys is the Director of the Public Relations Certificate Program and teaches courses in Organizational Communication and Public Relations. She can be reached at boysse@ucmail.uc.edu.

Global Glue and the Case of Fonterra

By Annie Viets

Introduction

Globalization is here to stay and organizations that can make it work for them are the ones that will survive and thrive. *Global Firms in 2020: The Next Decade of Change for Organisations and Workers*, a study conducted by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2010), predicted organizations able to operate seamlessly across borders, in different cultures, and with workforces that are extremely diverse will be the enterprises of the future. These firms will also be larger, more global, and spread over ever larger geographic areas.

The executives polled for the study predicted the workforce will be far more diverse than it is today, coming from a wide range of backgrounds and countries. First country nationals will become the employees of choice with long term expatriate assignments becoming rarer and rarer. Young, internationally savvy managers will be quickly promoted to replace retiring Baby Boomers. Contingent workers will be more common. Flexible and remote working arrangements will increase.

The effects of these trends on organizations over the next decade will be myriad and provide important and urgent work for professionals competent in the Human Resources and Organization Development disciplines and capable of being Business Partners.

Specifically, according to the study’s participants, core and contingent employees will need to learn to work harmoniously. Great diversity among employees will also compel organizations to work

harder to realize synergies and promote acceptance and appreciation while acquiring a more sophisticated understanding of what is important and motivating to this modern workforce. Employees worldwide will need to operate within certain common frameworks, and corporate cultures will become increasingly instrumental in instilling the firm’s globally applicable values and ethics over wide geographic areas.

A new breed of global managers will need to learn how to manage across borders, and sustain the performance of multi-ethnic, multifaceted employees, the study predicted. They will need to learn to manage in a fluid and changing environment where project teams define employees’ roles rather than titles and hierarchies. Flatter organizations will require more systemic means of managing collaboration and accountability and heightened competition will necessitate more, faster, and increasingly innovative teamwork across borders.

How will these sizeable global organizations avoid becoming lumbering giants and operate efficiently and synergistically over their vast geographic domains? They will need to apply “global glue,” a set of shared values and a common corporate culture. In fact, Noel Tichy (1983) actually defined organizational culture as shared values. In a review of studies related to values in international business practice, Sandra Williams (2011) concluded one of the characteristics of organizations able to successfully adapt to different cultures and anticipate change in an uncertain global environment was shared core values. She

stated, “Shared core values can transform a random group of individuals into a coherent and committed team, creating a synergy of community” (p. 323).

During a critical study of twelve large multinational corporations headquartered throughout the world, Rosabeth Moss Kanter (2006) uncovered similar characteristics of successful global companies. She found that at the core of each firm’s effective global reach was a “strong guidance system” consisting of standardized systems and shared values. Values that were nurtured in “hearts and minds,” she found, constituted the “key ingredient in the most vibrant and successful of today’s internationals” (p. 45). They enable employees in widely dispersed locations to “communicate and collaborate efficiently even despite great differences in backgrounds and cultural traditions, because they have a strong sense of business purpose and company identity” (p. 45). Patrick Lencioni (2002) took this concept a step further by insisting if values are “going to really take hold in your organization, your core values need to be integrated into every employee-related process... employees should be constantly reminded that core values form the basis for every decision the company makes” (p. 117).

The subjects in the Economist Intelligence Unit study (2010), according to the authors, appeared to corroborate the observations and assertions of Kantor, Williams, and Lencioni by collectively predicting that: “Defining a company’s culture and promoting it globally is another way companies will create a sense of community... When the core principles of an organization are understood by employees they develop a common sense of purpose and belonging” (p. 9). “It is this unified culture,” they foresee, “that will define successful global companies” (p. 5).

In this exciting and changing environment, OD and Human Resources professionals will increasingly be called upon to work as Business Partners with organizational leadership to critically examine and help transform organizational cultures while defining and refining global core values. They will also be major contributors to the design and delivery of corporate-wide

programs to embed the shared values and common culture that make up an organizations’ global glue.

Fonterra

One organization has already begun to spread its global glue. The leaders of Fonterra (www.fonterra.com), a New Zealand cooperative that grew rapidly to become a major player in the global dairy products industry, recognized early in the organization’s process of globalizing that global glue was needed. Its subsequent successful

actual experiences” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999, p. 14), can be a pivotal transformational tool. Filmmaker, Peter Gruber (2007), described storytelling as “one of the most powerful tools for achieving astonishing results” (p. 55). For leaders, he claimed, “storytelling is action-oriented—a force for turning dreams into goals and then into results” (p. 55). Nancy McGaw and Lisa Fabish (2006), writing on the results of an Aspen Institute/Booz Allen Hamilton survey of global executives, advise organizations to overcome challenges and gain a competitive edge by encouraging “employ-

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initiative to reinvent a globally cohesive and relevant organization that was infinitely greater than each of its operating units illustrated the strength of the concept of shared values discussed in the Economist study (2010) and noted by Kantor (2006) and Williams (2011). By incorporating the OD principles of Appreciative Inquiry storytelling, the leadership, human resources, and corporate marketing worked together to embark on a wide ranging, cross-cultural change initiative to bring a unified culture to the firm’s widely dispersed global operations.

At first glance, storytelling might not seem to be a vehicle of choice for a large multinational attempting to unite and reinvigorate its global organization. However, storytelling, particularly from the Appreciative Inquiry perspective of “listening together to moments when the organization was ‘alive’ and the future becomes visible through ideals interwoven with

ees to share stories about how they have used a corporate value...” and to “invite employees at all levels and across all functions to talk about what these values mean to them” (p. 3).

According to Kenneth Gergen (Kratzenmaker, 2001), current president of the Taos Institute, peoples’ behavior in organizations is shaped by the way they talk about their behavior, and “if we could construct a world in which something is possible, we can talk about that in such a way that we might be able to achieve it together. Suddenly, you create a tremendous positive energy” (p. 3). It follows that “Good news stories are used to craft possibility propositions that bridge the best of ‘what is’ with collective aspiration of ‘what might be’” (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999, p. 15).

Appreciative, values-focused storytelling, therefore, became the technique of choice for Fonterra. The cooperative was in its eighth year since inception and

had matured to the point where management recognized it was an appropriate time to revisit its core vision and values to ensure they resonated with the organization's diverse employee base and refreshed organizational strategy. According to Joanne Fair, HR Director for the Cooperative's Global Ingredients and Foodservice business unit, the organization's leadership was faced with an issue not uncommon in organizations that grow globally from strong local roots: "The question we asked ourselves was, 'How can we celebrate our New Zealand heritage while recognizing our new global identity and do both under the umbrella of one, cohesive entity?'"

With operations and activities on six continents, research and development centers in New Zealand, Australia, the US and the Netherlands, 16,000 employees, and a product line-up of 900 different dairy ingredients that were supplied to food companies and pediatric applications around the world, this need to engage employees around a common vision and values presented a formidable challenge.

While the organization had always had a vision and a set of robust values, they tended to be very formal, and didn't always translate well to other languages. "We did not," Joanne said, "articulate our strategy and values in a globally relevant way. We wanted to provide our managers throughout the world with a lens through which to set priorities, make the right decisions, and have the tough conversations." Without this, it was felt, strategic business units might drift and lose a sense of common purpose and goals.

What ensued was a creative and insightful top-down and bottom-up collaboration based on "keeping it personal" and storytelling among senior management, corporate marketing, and human resources to design, roll-out, and continuously promote a global identity for the dairy giant.

The process of achieving this began with 300 appreciative inquiry interviews with employees from all levels in the organizations and from all geographic locations as well as with a number of stakeholders: farmers, members of the shareholders' council, board directors, and customers. This information, together

with the research from a study of corporate brand essences, a study of the New Zealand psyche, and a review of Fonterra's history was then processed by board directors, members of the shareholders' council, the executive council, and a group of "future thinkers" comprised of twelve managers and executives from across the organization.

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One of the most interesting cultural exercises during this phase involved teasing out the meaning of the organization's deeply entrenched Kiwi values in a way that made sense to international employees. For instance, one value articulated as "Kia Kaha" (literally "forever strong") in Maori, or "Stand Tall," evoked the strength of the tall, strong stands of kauri trees native to New Zealand's North Island. It was a concept deeply resonant with New Zealanders but of limited relevance to employees living in other countries.

"Kia Kaha" (literally "forever strong") in Maori, or "Stand Tall," evoked the strength of the tall, strong stands of kauri trees native to New Zealand's North Island. It was a concept deeply resonant with New Zealanders but of limited relevance to employees living in other countries. It was therefore enveloped into "Make it Happen," the fourth of four core values, as "Aim high; deliver exceptional results" and "Step up; take accountability." Another Kiwi value important to retain was "Fair Play," a rugby expression familiar to almost everyone in a country that loves its rugby. It became "Treat others as I would expect to be treated," a supporting concept for the second value, "Do What's Right." The other two values that emerged were "Co-operative Spirit," and "Challenge Boundaries," both of which could be easily understood across cultures.

During the Design phase of Appreciative Inquiry, the rich lode of data resulting

from the interviews and studies was distilled into *This is Fonterra*, the organization's story that consisted of its vision, its corporate strategy and its values. According to Joanne, it laid out "who we are, why we exist, where we come from, how we will conduct our business and what our fundamental reason for being is, over and above profit and financial gain. The corporate strategy provided a clear focus on what needed to be done commercially and organizationally to achieve the vision with a reinvigorated set of values that were to be our guiding principles and moral compass."

The most exhilarating phase of the project, the Destiny phase or rollout, came next. How do you communicate something this huge and fundamental to a company that is widely dispersed and yet keep it personal, relevant, and impactful? The phrasing of this step, the "Bring it to Life" phase, was therefore very deliberate.

This is Fonterra was launched at the organization's annual global congress attended by its 200 top leaders. Toolkits were distributed to assist them to roll out the initiative in their own operations in their own countries within thirty days. Leaders were encouraged to overlay the Fonterra story with their own stories that they had developed at the congress. Each roll-out was culture-specific. For instance, in Australia and New Zealand, managers tended to take traditional approaches with leadership workshops. The Brands Asia division, on the other hand, involved its entire workforce in a

“big-bang” celebration. In Joanne’s division, she, the Managing Director and the Commercial Director “kept it personal” by visiting all its regional offices and engaging employees in six countries over a six week period.

Sad stories abound about organization change initiatives that are rolled out with much fanfare only to fizzle when put to the test so the Fonterra change leaders were wary. When *This is Fonterra* was presented to the organization, they were ready to begin the process of consolidation by embedding its story, vision, strategy, and values into everything about the organization. The look, feel, and tone of its brand and communications about the brand were aligned with the story’s opening statement, “We are Fonterra—we are of the land.” It was used as a lever to develop leadership capability and engage employees. It became a driver for performance through its clear and consistent communication of vision and strategy and by focusing the organization on consistent behavioral competencies. Human Resources immediately incorporated the concepts in *This is Fonterra* into people processes and systems from hire to exit. Values became an integral part of the interview for every candidate. Everyone’s performance was measured not only on the “what” but also on the “how.” Leaders, in particular, were held accountable for being able to point to specific actions he/she had taken to live and exemplify the values.

It was also finessed by each and every strategic business unit in every country into language and concepts that resonated with the stories of local employees. Leaders were encouraged to put *This is Fonterra* to the test using it as a framework for making decisions, solving problems, and coaching teams and to report back on what worked and what did not. It was an effort that involved every employee in every operation throughout the world.

Two years after the launch, Human Resources and Marketing continue to partner to drive awareness and connection to the vision and values throughout the organization. This is done in a non-corporate way, reflecting the tone and essence of *This is Fonterra*. “The values are living and

breathing in the organization,” remarked Joanne. “They have become a part of our language, how we think about ourselves and how we conduct our business.” This is not a small claim for a global, culturally diverse organization. Fonterra has demonstrated that even with a large, diverse operation, you can create the “global glue” to keep it personal and engage employees at a meaningful level.

Appreciative Inquiry storytelling and process appeared to enable this global enterprise to reach and inspire employees at every level in every part of its organization throughout the world. The coalition of leadership, human resources, and marketing introduced a movement and embedded the “glue” of values and culture that will continue to serve and develop the organization and its employees as they incorporate what Cooperrider and Whitney (1999) have called the “poetic principle.” As such, “an organization’s ‘story’ is constantly being rewritten by everyone in the organization and everyone who interacts with it. The organization, like a poem, is constantly being interpreted and reinterpreted” (Watkins & Mohr, 2001, in Krattenmaker, 2001, p. 3).

As more organizations expand internationally and communication and information technologies change the way we organize and interact to conduct business, the importance of a common culture and values to unite dispersed and diverse operations will only grow. Global glue, as an organization development concept, will have applicability far into the future.

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Annie Viets, EdD, is a management consultant, psychologist, mediator, and educator. Her career has included senior positions at Ben & Jerry’s, The Hay Group, and the New Zealand-based multinational Fletcher Challenge. She was the director of the management program at the SIT Graduate Institute in Brattleboro, Vermont. Before joining the SIT Graduate Institute faculty in 2007, Annie was at the University of Vermont, School of Business Administration, where she taught graduate, undergraduate, and executive education courses in management, organization behavior, international human resources, and sustainable leadership. She can be reached at annie.viets@burlingtontelecom.net.

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Working with Intercultural Teams to Optimize Performance

By Anne Rød

As globalization continues many organization development professionals are asking themselves: How can we develop the cultural competence our leaders need to successfully lead international teams? How can we build a pool of people who are candidates for expatriation/international leadership positions? And how can we support the integration of international and virtual teams?

Many intercultural endeavors are stranded due to a lack of awareness, competencies, and skills among leaders. Ambition and drive is not enough to succeed internationally. One also needs to look at “softer” skills such as adaptability, ability to read verbal and non-verbal signals, active listening, tuning into different styles of communication, being conscious and aware of impact; plus the need to blend in curiosity, a willingness to shift perspectives and learn, and openness to influence. Last, add a touch of stamina combined with a desire to grow as a person, and you have your candidate. In sum, the abilities traditionally associated with Emotional and Social Intelligence in combination with cultural understanding and competence. However, there is another capacity that is proving to be the make or break of intercultural teams, that of systems awareness and intelligence, also known as Relationship System Intelligence. RSI is spearheaded by the CRR Global (www.crrglobal.com) and draws upon a wide set of tools and frameworks enabling us to unfold the dynamics of a human relationship system, and create what is needed next. In combination with cultural

awareness, this emerging approach is giving intercultural teams a new lease on life as the author has discovered in her work.

RSI focuses on the intercultural team as a system rather than the individual team member. Some of its main underpinnings are:

1. Each team member is a voice of the relationship system, and hence an information carrier of what is happening in that system and how the system dynamics are experienced.
2. By “hearing” all the voices in the system—be it the popular, marginalized, or silent ones—the system begins to understand itself through the extensive and often diverse range of information available.
3. As the human relationship system is revealed to itself and sees itself, it will begin to self adjust, a dynamic known from nature. Focus becomes on moving the system forward and to create alignment in the process.
4. The system is naturally creative and generative, meaning that the system has the answers within itself, and learns to lean into the inherent wisdom and generative capabilities available. From this perspective the team is able to address and successfully meet challenges and navigate changes.

Cultural programming and intercultural differences manifested in the behavior of team members are crucial in understanding a team system, and furthermore, how it impacts overall business performance. Research shows that global leadership is

not easy. In a survey carried out by Price Waterhouse Coopers, US and European senior executives say 65% of the challenges they face when managing across different countries can be attributed to cultural differences. This is only superseded by individuals changing behavior (69% of the challenges). Further down the list we find differences in business practice (52%), remote headquarters, and labor laws both at 41%.

At the outset most teams will not acknowledge the challenges intercultural differences present and how these can impact their work. Normally, these surface after a certain period of time and are not addressed until a project is in crisis. The differences will be attributed to personal conflict, faultfinding, a “we vs. them” dynamic, stereotyping, and other unskillful approaches. The looming deadlines increase pressure and the personal stress team members experience contributes to many of them reverting to the fundamentals of their personal human programming.

How are the challenges addressed at this point? How could they have been avoided en route? What “rules of engagement” should or could have been established, according to which culture? In a team system each member will bring his or her own cultural and interpersonal programming, the sooner we learn to deal with it respectfully and resourcefully, the sooner the business targets can be achieved, in line with everyone’s interest and objectives.

Ina Baum, an intercultural competence leadership expert from Germany, spends her time with large multicultural organizations like the Otto Group, Itelligence, and Cemex, to support the understanding and management of the cultural differences. “The conscious management of intercultural differences is crucial,” she explains. “The differences are there whether you like it or not, so we need to understand them and start to manage them intentionally and at an early stage.” She continues, “This is not about the color of your socks and how you hold your knife and fork, but about understanding the deep motivations driving the behavior, and how to address those resourcefully.”

Before we look at the concrete

approach of working with intercultural teams, it is necessary to explore some of the theoretical and practical framework already available to us.

What You See and What You Do Not

Imagine an iceberg, only 10% is visible above the waterline and the remaining 90% below is invisible to the human eye, yet it carries the critical mass. Now compare this to a human being. The first thing that catches our attention in another human is appearance and behavior, verbal and non-verbal, and this is where our interaction with other cultures begins. Our initial response is an emotional one, which we later justify rationally, and we react with like, dislike, confusion, abhorrence, or maybe even frustration. We evaluate, compare, judge, and draw conclusions about the behavior—the 10%—we see in others without exploring the underlying factors precipitating the actions and appearances—the remaining 90%. And then we react; it is often an exaggerated response because few of us are conscious of our own invisible “iceberg” of the critical mass that determines who we are culturally.

At the basis of all human behaviors lie deep conscious and unconscious values. These values determine and govern our attitudes, beliefs systems, and ultimately our behavior. Often we cannot make sense of another person’s behavior because it is so different from our own. We cannot even begin to understand how they feel because the distance between our realities is so vast. This often leads us down the path of judgment and disassociation. Other times we assume we understand someone’s thoughts, attitudes, and actions because—on the surface—they appear very similar to our own. When these turn out not to be true we can end up angry, disappointed, and even feel dejected.

Relying on the fact that we are all human beings with similar thoughts, emotions, and dreams is of course a good guiding principle and often true to a certain extent; however, the way we go about achieving the dreams, emotions, and thoughts we have can be very different.

Cultural Programming

One of the main contributors to the field of cultural competence Geert Hofstede (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010) defines culture as “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category from another.” New-borns are like sponges and absorb nonverbal and verbal cues available in their environment from day one. The purpose is to adapt and assimilate behavior they see, hear, and experience to ensure their own survival. This process is the start of the cultural programming and is filtered and shaped through our gender, our closest groups, and the national culture these groups carry. The family is usually the main influencer in the earliest years, later supported and reinforced by school and other societal institutions. Around the age of 15 years most of our basic cultural programming is in place and we will carry it with us the rest of our lives; sophisticated software that cannot be removed, only modified and added to. Without our being aware of it, this programming of values and embedded beliefs—in combination with what is already present in us through inheritance—will account for, and explain, our attitudes and behaviors.

Many of us will travel and meet, work, and live in different cultures, and as a result we may feel quite culturally savvy. We can adapt to visible cues which makes life in a foreign culture less painful, such as dress code, knowing the language, following local manners and customs, and to some extent reading the non-verbal behaviors. The more culturally competent may also distinguish subtle cues such as status and rank, but what about deeply hidden programs such as morals, beliefs, and values? How do we even begin to understand these and recognize their manifestation in behaviors? And at what point do we run out of curiosity and stamina and revert to our own cultural programming, knowingly or not?

Development Model for Intercultural Sensitivity

Researchers in the field of cultural competence have developed models that act as frameworks to understand the stages we move through as we interact with other cultures and have the opportunity to develop our own cultural competence. The theme of these theories is that in order to succeed, we need to understand and accept that there are cultural differences, to respect and be sensitive to them, and ultimately work with them. Crucial in this is the understanding of our own cultural programming: what makes us who we are. Another Dutch pioneer in the field Fons Trompenaars (1997) sums this up in the three Rs: Recognize, Respect, and Reconcile.

When working with organizations, we have found time again that most do not recognize the cultural differences present despite the fundamental impact the differences are having on the communication and collaboration aspects of organizational performance. Rather, they are ignored until they become major obstacles and by then irreparable damages have occurred, deadlines are not met, contracts lost, and talent left. Working in intercultural organizations and teams requires, like other human interaction, an appreciation for human emotions at work, but at a more subtle level. In other words, we need to tune up our awareness levels and become more sophisticated and conscious in our approach. Milton J. Bennett's (1993) Development Model for Intercultural Sensitivity is a valuable framework for understanding where a person, a team, or organization is on their intercultural development journey, and what they need to address to increase their intercultural competence.

The first stage is called *Denial of Difference*. A person at this stage will often say things like: "With my experience, I can be successful in any culture without any special effort"; or "I find I can speak my language and get on anywhere in the world." The main challenge here is to recognize that cultural differences actually do exist, and identify how they differ in expression.

The second stage is *Defense against*

Difference. At this stage the differences are recognized but often stereotyped and evaluated positively or negatively, from judging to elevating one's own or others' culture. Common statements are: "This is not how we do it at home—this is strange"; or the opposite, "I wish I could give up my own cultural background and come and live here, they really know how to appreciate life."

The third stage is *Minimization of Differences*. Here the differences in superficial and visible cues—the top of the iceberg—are recognized and accepted while the emphasis is on the similarities of human beings and the values we share. At this stage people will say things like: "Just be yourself—we are all the same at the core"; and "At the end of the day we are all human beings who want the same things in life."

The fourth stage, *Acceptance of Differences*, crosses a barrier from a focus on self to relating to others, where we acknowledge that there is a difference. Here we both recognize and appreciate the differences in values and behaviors (the iceberg underneath the surface). At this point learning and knowing your own cultural programming becomes vital and openness and curiosity towards others is increased. This is indicated through statements such as: "I always try to read up on a foreign culture before I go there." "I know my background and I appreciate that we have different life experiences but we are learning to bridge these and work together." Many of the competencies we associate with Emotional and Social Intelligence emerge here.

At the fifth stage, *Adaptation to Differences*, the adaptation process starts and the emphasis is to develop communication skills and behaviors to enable effective and meaningful interaction across boundaries. Reading signals and cues are vital here, both verbal and non-verbal, as is a willingness to consciously shift perspectives and use empathy, thus building Emotional and Social Intelligence. Hence statements like: "To solve this conflict I need to explore new perspectives and change my approach"; or "The more I understand the culture and its underpinnings, the better I get at the language."

The final stage is *Integration of Differences*, where a person is able to fluidly shift cultural worldviews and find truths in all of them. The sense of self is not based on any one culture. While this can lead to confusion of one's own identity, it can also generate great bridge building skills. In this category we find "global nomads" and it is recognized through comments like: "Whatever the situation I can usually look at it from many different cultural viewpoints" (Bennett, 1993).

Trust: the Foundation of all Relationships

Formal and informal organizational cultures often hide the national cultures that exist in a company. Leaders run the risk of relying too much on the notion that we are all humans, without exploring how our embedded beliefs and values, and consequent needs, may manifest differently in our behavior. Most business people will insist that good business relations are about trust. As humans working in an intercultural environment we need to pay constant attention to how we can create credibility and trust in our relationships. What behavior creates trust in one culture compared to another? What do I need to do in order to create that trust; what separates us and how can I build bridges? What do we have in common and how can I leverage that?

It is also important to remember that in human relationships we impact and are impacted continuously—for better or worse, intentionally and not. An easy tool to apply is the American psychologist Carl Roger's model of *Intention—Behavior—Impact*. We are normally aware of our intention in a given situation (if not endeavor to become more conscious), but this can be hard for others to see and understand. We have little notion of how others experience our behavior, and what the consequent emotional impact is. The variable in this equation that can be altered is our behavior. How can we adapt our behavior to achieve our intention and create the impact we want? If our intention is to create trust and the desired impact is that people have an emotional experience of trust when dealing with us, what

behavior is needed to create it? How can we develop the flexibility to adapt our behavior given different cultural circumstances without losing our essence as a person?

Understanding ourselves and understanding others whether it is as individuals, teams, or organizations is key to creating trust.

Understanding Self

Daniel Goleman's (2006) concept of Emotional and Social Intelligence is a good starting point as it provides insight, awareness, and consciousness around self. He talks about the ability to identify and understand one's own emotions, find motivational factors in self and others, realizing the impact one has on others through one's behavior, and being able to manage these emotions. In addition comes—through social intelligence—the ability to stand in other peoples' perspectives and empathize with them, and to build and maintain positive human relationships.

Working with other cultures is fun and exciting; however it can also be challenging, especially if we have lived in another culture for a long period of time, or go somewhere extremely different to our usual environment. When we are misunderstood, or unable to connect or communicate, we can become frustrated. In certain situations we can even experience that our values are being “stepped on.” Our own cultural programming is so strong, and not always visible to ourselves, that our strong response (offended sensibilities) can surprise us. In all of these instances we run the risk of responding inappropriately and overreacting given the context we are in; we call this state “being triggered.” So a crucial part of knowing ourselves is also to know our own triggers; in what situations are we likely to be triggered and what strategies can we develop to manage our reactions more skillfully?

Understanding Others

For us to understand the human system we are entering into, we need to know about the 90% of the iceberg that we cannot see. A way to increase our cultural competence

and effectiveness is to explore the cultural values that underpin the societies we operate in. There are numerous theories and approaches to understanding culture and building cultural competence, and research continues in this increasingly important field. Most of us do not have the time or resources to dive deep into this material, and we need to rely on and trust what is already present, proved reliable, and validated through repetitive studies over time—even decades.

One such framework that gives us a good starting point for exploring underly-

When we are misunderstood, or unable to connect or communicate, we can become frustrated. In certain situations we can even experience that our values are being “stepped on.” Our own cultural programming is so strong, and not always visible to ourselves, that our strong response (offended sensibilities) can surprise us. In all of these instances we run the risk of responding inappropriately and overreacting given the context we are in; we call this state “being triggered.”

ing values and beliefs systems is the 5D model developed by Geert Hofstede (2010). The 5 D model explores human relationships with respect to value differences between national cultures. Through extensive—and reproduced research, over the last four decades, more than 100 nations have been measured along these five identified dimensions. These dimensions address aspects that reflect key determining factors necessary for survival in human systems; hierarchy, relationships, one's role in society, uncertainty, and virtuousness.

Hofstede defines the five dimensions as:

- » **Power Distance Index (PDI)** deals with the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.
- » **Individualism/Collectivism.** In Individualist societies people are supposed to look after themselves and their direct family only. In Collectivist societies people belong to “in groups” that take

care of them in exchange for loyalty. The group belonging becomes the lifeline for survival as opposed to the individualistic countries where people need to prove themselves and succeed on their own accord.

- » **Masculine/Feminine cultures** deals with one's role in society. In masculine cultures the dominant values in society are achievement, status, and success. In feminine cultures the dominant values in society are caring for others, quality of life, and societal solidarity.
- » **Uncertainty Avoidance** deals with the

extent to which people feel threatened by ambiguous situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these. Among others, this feeling is expressed through nervous stress and a need for predictability, a need for written and unwritten rules.

- » **Long-term Orientation** deals with the extent to which a society exhibits a pragmatic future-oriented perspective rather than a conventional historical or short-term point of view.

Armed with these five dimensions, and an understanding of how they impact the culture we are in, we can develop our cultural competence gradually. We can compare our country score with that of others and assess the differences and what we need to be aware of.

Revealing the System We Are In

By applying Bennett's approach we can identify our place on the development

model, and discover ways to expand our cultural competence. Hofstede's 5D model offers insights into the cultural norms of others, helping us to approach intercultural contexts more skillfully. To assess how to work with a human relationship system, we need to understand what is going on, or "reveal" it. Imagine looking at the nationalities present in a global team, how do they differ? How can we normalize the differences? How can we begin to understand the cultural norms and embedded values and the ways they are manifested in daily interactions? What do we need to be aware of, and acknowledge, explicitly and implicitly? What are the strengths this human system has that we all can leverage? How can we build culturally sensitive agreements, or create understandings, that can assist us when challenges occur?

Building Bridges and Working More Effectively

The challenge continues to be our assumptions and judgments, our urge to compare and decide what is right or wrong; or trying to change people, believing that our way is the best. Just being open to the positive intentions behind the behaviors of others is an important starting point. This means that rather than making assumptions, judgments, or trying to change the cultures one encounters, we need to explore and empathize with the emotional stance people in these cultures have. The mental programming is based in the core human emotional need of safety and belonging and is very unlikely to change. It can be a real stretch for us to extend into the emotional sphere and programming of another person, and not something we can maintain for long periods at a time. How long can we extend and explore, without over-extending or losing ourselves?

Prior to meeting a team, we can use the 5D model to compare our personal national cultural scores with those present in the team. What do we need to be aware of? How do we need to adapt our style to meet the team system we are facing? How can we create trust on their terms? Given the intercultural differences, how can we best meet the team system? How can we be

AMERICAN/FRENCH PROJECT TEAM

A joint American and French project team was facing severe problems. The deadline for project delivery was looming and the team was suffering. Some of the symptoms that were cited during the interviews included:

- » Total breakdown in communication
- » Absent leadership, focus, and vision
- » Complete lack of trust
- » Hidden agendas and backstabbing
- » Fatigue and exhaustion
- » Different approaches to work leads to double and triple work loads
- » Blame and toxic communication
- » Lack of confidence in the project success
- » Lack of responsibility

The approach: a combination of intercultural competence training and Relationship System Intelligence methodology

Most team members in key positions were gathered for a two-day workshop. The first day was dedicated to team cultural analysis with a deep look at issues that can naturally arise in this type of team combination. The second half of the day was dedicated to intercultural competence training and practical applications and discussions pertaining to this team.

Day two was an in-depth application of RSI through experiential exercises designed to understand the team as a system with its intercultural differences:

- » Education on system awareness and normalizing challenges facing the team
- » Revealing the system to itself through a process of informal constellations mapping thus increasing awareness of the team system and discovering aspects of the team
- » Focusing on the language issue and the impact of this on the team
- » Interactive process looking at the qualities of the team, past, present, and what is needed in the future
- » Revealing mutual expectations and needs
- » Focusing on the common dream and vision for the project to identify what aligns the team
- » Spotting and dealing with toxic communication
- » Dealing with issues facing the team through role play
- » Feedback session for optimal learning
- » Small group work on how to deal with specific issues facing team counter parts
- » Learning debrief
- » Next steps

conscious about our intentions and desired impact, what attitude and behavior do we need to tune up/down to realize our aims?

Using the same tool, analyze the intercultural differences in the team. What issues may show up—or linger underneath the surface—of the team system? How can we deal with this (not according to our own culture) but in a way that includes all the cultures present and the team system?

1. **Meet the system:** Use the above insights to create team agreements. Educate on the 5D model exploring what national cultures are present in this team system. Adopt a non-confrontational style to investigate what this poses.
2. **Reveal the system:** Provide context for the application of the cultural insights by exploring where the team system is in the business delivery process.

Help the team see and understand the dynamics within their own system, including the intercultural dynamics, and how this impacts the team as a system. What are the team strengths to leverage and what are the challenges to be addressed? Looking at the team as a unit, what are the resources available to address the challenges? Where is the system on Bennett's model, and what can we do to support the development of the system?

- 3. Align the system:** Given the above; what can the system align around to achieve its objectives? What agreements need to be in place to ensure respect and trust across intercultural differences? Who can the team draw upon for what? What adjustments need to be made in behavior and communication styles? How does the team deal with conflict, language difficulties, and other issues that may show up? How does the team ensure a blend of productive and positive relations within the team?
- 4. Action:** Moving the system forward with a new awareness, curiosity, and respect. The necessary agreements are in place, as are strategies for dealing with future challenges. And ultimately, what does each team member need to be aware of in him/herself in order to contribute to the success of the team?

This four-step approach will ensure a pedagogic process where systemic voices are heard and included to arrive at productive results for the team system. In the sidebar on the previous page there is a case description, practical steps, and a team cultural analysis, all aimed at providing relevant input for application.

Conclusion

Most large organizations will at one point have international exposure, either through client and distributor interfaces, joint projects, or a long-term presence overseas. In order to minimize costs and increase effectiveness, the organizations need to have a proactive approach to selecting and training leadership potential that can take

on international positions making it a success from the outset, not just by learning the hard and costly way. Traditional leadership qualities are not sufficient in dealing with intercultural issues effectively. Whereas a high emotional and social intelligence will provide a solid starting point, it is not sufficient to succeed long term. Intercultural competence training designed to understand motivation and behavioral drivers is key, as is a deep understanding of self and one's own personal and unique cultural programming. This will enable the leader to recognize and understand his or her own reactions without judgment of self or others. Familiarity with the Development Model for Intercultural Sensitivity will provide a map for the leader's personal development process with respect to intercultural work.

Last, but not least, a leader navigating the waters of intercultural work needs to train his or her systems awareness. As humans we are part of human relationship systems wherever we are and wherever we go. Knowing that one always has an impact, regardless of what one says or does, and even more important, what one does not say or does not do. As a leader in an intercultural environment it is a crucial capability to be able to see oneself as part of the human system one is in, knowing what impact one has, stepping back from the system and observing it. By reading the small cues, the subtleties, and the team atmosphere, it is easier for the leader to assess what is going on in the system, use the intercultural competence to explore what is needed next and how to ensure it happens. As one client said about a project abroad:

I had to get over myself, realize that I was part of the system, and I learnt to stick around and observe the impact of my behavior—not always a pretty sight. Gradually I adopted a bit of cultural *fingerspitzengefühl* [awareness] as the Germans say, which saved the day and the project.

Anne Rød, MA, CPCC, is an Intercultural management consultant and executive coach based in Oslo, Norway. With twenty years in international PR and marketing before entering the field of intercultural coaching and facilitation, Rød has a broad understanding of international business. As a senior trainer with CRR Global, Rød travels extensively to offer team development training in different cultures. She continues to develop and deliver executive coaching, team development and leadership programs for various international organizations. She can be reached at anne@anne-rod.com.

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Family, Buildings, and Wars

Organizational Conceptual Metaphors

By Mary Jean Vignone

I intend to clear a path from theory to practice through exploration of practical applications of conceptual metaphor analysis. I believe that conceptual metaphors are powerful tools for OD professionals. Specifically, conceptual metaphor theory and analysis have positive impacts in the areas of leaders’ communication, understanding organizational culture, and facilitating organizational change. In this article, I explore the practical side of conceptual metaphor analysis to propose new applications for OD professionals.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Metaphors are not just in our words but provide a window into our very thoughts.

Metaphors help us to conceptualize intangible concepts like love, life, business, and money (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). According to conceptual metaphor theory, the elements of one conceptual domain, (source domain) are associated, or cognitively mapped, to the characteristics of another conceptual domain (target domain) (Lakoff, 1993; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff & Turner, 1989). For example, in the sentence “As a result of improper lending, credit markets are frozen and lending has dried up,” we see that a number of elements related to our understanding of “liquid” (i.e., can freeze; can dry up) are applied to characteristics of our concept of “money.” Therefore, the conceptual metaphor, “money is liquid,” is evident in this context.

Other examples of the conceptual

metaphor, money is liquid, are found in the following sentences:

1. With all this debt, *I can barely keep my head above water.*
2. Their mom and pop *store was underwater* ever since the big box stores came to town.
3. Her business was finally providing her with a *positive cash flow.*

The words in *italics* above are evidences of the conceptual metaphor, money is liquid. When large quantities of money are understood as being like deep water, they can metaphorically structure real hazards to people contending with owing large amounts of money—thus we can be *swimming* in debt, even *drowning* in debt, or failing to keep a local business *afloat* against a *tide* that favors deep-pocketed competitors with their economies of scale.

Organizational Shape Shifting

The use of metaphor analysis in organizational change is not a new concept and can help to shape effectiveness of change. In 1993, Marshak (2009b) proposed four images (metaphor elements) of change and corresponding images of change agents (*Table 1*).

Based on which metaphor is in play, the OD practitioner would be able to diagnose, prepare, and align people with the objectives of the change.

Marshak (2009a) continued his journey into the metaphoric qualities of organizational change by his proposal to use organizational discourse to develop

Table 1: Metaphors of Change and Change Agents

Change Metaphor	Change Agent Metaphor
Fix and Maintain	Repair Person, Maintenance Worker, Mechanic
Build and Develop	Trainer, Coach, Developer
Move and Relocate	Planner, Guide, Explorer
Liberate and Recreate	Liberator, Visionary, Creator

Adapted from Managing the Metaphors of Change (Marshak, 2009b, p. 131)

a holistic approach to organizational change. He recommended an action research approach to identify discursive elements that reflect impediments to change.

Using an action research method, I conducted a change readiness assessment for an organization preparing for a strategic change. I interviewed 21 senior level executives who were two levels below the CEO. Each hour-long interview was recorded along with a confidentiality agreement in place. As I analyzed the data, metaphors emerged that illustrated the obstacles that would impair implementation of the strategic plan. “Business is nourishment” was a reoccurring metaphor. However, its purpose varied based on the specific question asked during the interview.

For instance, to describe the new strategic goal of focusing on the upper end of the marketplace, one senior manager used the metaphor of “eating only the top of the muffin.” In another instance, one manager described the disconnect between the retail locations and the internal operations as going into an exclusive restaurant that is well appointed then going into its sloppy, messy, and dysfunctional kitchen that was unable to produce quality food.

Another metaphor that was used repetitively was Mason-Dixon Line to describe the animosity between the southern locations and the northern locations of the organization. The conceptual metaphor implied was “organization is at war.” When I presented my findings to the CEO, I punctuated each topic with metaphors found in the managers’ discourse without disclosure of the metaphors’ originators. The metaphors increased the CEO’s ability

to understand and subsequently address challenges by shifting the shape of the change to better align the organization with the strategic plan. For example, the CEO bridged the gap between the northern and southern parts of the company through realigning the regional leadership to ensure consistency through the organization. Additionally, more resources and attention was devoted to improving the effectiveness and efficiencies of operations. Through improved communication about the strategic direction, middle managers were able to understand how the company was positioned for growth in the upper end market without expense to their existing customer relationships.

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Leaders’ Words Sculpt Reality

Identifying conceptual metaphors of CEOs, especially during difficult times for a company, can give insight into the inner workings of their leadership style. An example of conceptual metaphor identification in CEO’s metaphors occurred at an organization during the recent economic downturn.

The changes in the CEO’s metaphors during corporate telephonic town halls were indicative of the financial state of the company and actions taken.

Early in 2009, the CEO addressed employees at the town hall using the conceptual metaphor “business is family.” He explained how all employees are in the economic turmoil together. He used the word “family” numerous times when discussing the employees and their relationships to customers and communities. Evidences of the family source domain were in his descriptions of employees’ care and consideration for each other.

A month later, the CEO’s metaphor of “business is a building” displaced “business is a family.” The CEO did not mention the word “family” or acknowledge employees for their dedication and loyalty. Instead, he spoke about strengthening the balance sheet and building a strong foundation. Those words are elements of a building metaphor and the personification of the company was gone. Shortly after that town hall, twenty percent of the employees were laid off.

Months later, the element of strengthening the balance sheet shifted to the CEO’s statement that “We must fortress

our balance sheet.” The evidence of the word “fortress” implied that the company was at war. The CEO’s metaphor changed to “business is war.” Immediately following the town hall, employee engagement and morale suffered, as a veil of fear covered the company. Employees, investors, and customers questioned the organization’s survival. As a result, some key employees

left because they were afraid the end was near.

More time passed, until the CEO was able to announce new investors who will help bring the company back to financial health, implying personification of the company once again. The CEO's metaphor shifted back to "business is family" that is healthy once again, but the fear and distrust remained. I propose that if CEOs are more conscious of the impact of their metaphors on their organizations, then they can manage change more effectively.

Deep, active listening coupled with conceptual metaphor identification can enhance an executive coach's ability to assess the needs of the person being coached. Identifying the metaphor and understanding elements of the source domain that may impair or enhance the leader's success is a key technique that can be incorporated into a structured executive coaching plan.

Walking the Talk: Leadership Coaching

Conceptual metaphor analysis falls within the study of leadership discourse analysis that seeks understanding in the ways of "knowing, talking about, and justifying leadership" (Fairhurst, 2007, p. ix). The praxis of discourse analysis and conceptual metaphor theory provides a foundation for helping leaders to understand how they conceptualize their roles and communicate to others. Insight into leaders' metaphor frameworks can shed light on the way they approach and act in their defined role. A practitioner can use conceptual metaphor analysis in coaching opportunities.

Coaching the Ship's Captain

The image of an executive whisperer comes to mind when thinking about the use of conceptual metaphor theory and executive coaching. Just like the horse whisperer uses the natural horsemanship techniques of "listening" to horses' body language (Bell, 2010), the executive coach can use conceptual metaphor theory as a way to listen to the leaders' conceptualization about his or her role. As taught

in many educational programs about executive coaching, active listening is one of the most important skills (Haneberg, 2006). Deep, active listening coupled with conceptual metaphor identification can enhance an executive coach's ability to assess the needs of the person being coached. Identifying the metaphor and understanding elements of the source domain that may impair or enhance the leader's success is a key technique that can be incorporated into a structured executive coaching plan.

One example of how this technique was used with a business leader occurred recently. During introductory conversations, the leader articulated how he viewed his role with the following comments:

"A successful business must have *the right person at the helm.*"

"*I must navigate* this company *through the storm.*"

"We need *direction*, so I need to know *which way the wind is blowing.*"

Evidences, in *italics* above, reveal two conceptual metaphors, "business is a ship" and "a leader is the ship's captain."

I identified the conceptual metaphors and was able to ask more probing questions to better understand the leader's challenges. I then entered into the leader's conceptual metaphor to script questions. Some of my inquiries included:

1. Did the leader feel alone at the helm?
2. Was his crew engaged in the sailing of the business?
3. How did he find out which way the wind was blowing?

4. Was the storm a result of competition, the regulatory environment, economic environment, or internal turmoil?

The executive and I were able to create a successful executive coaching plan based on the answers to these questions. Also, the executive recognized his metaphorical perspective and was able to shift his metaphor to another one that was more appropriate for the situation.

Man Your Battle Stations

Another example of a coaching technique was a result of an interaction between a friend and me. We were sitting in a restaurant having brunch one Sunday morning. She was visibly upset while discussing her and her husband's legal issues. Her comments were:

"They're out to get us in this legal battle."

"I have to destroy them before they destroy us."

"We're going to fight this with everything we got."

"I'm going to use whatever ammunition I can find."

After listening to these types of comments for about 20 minutes over eggs, I asked if she was aware that she was using a war ("litigation is war") metaphor? She responded that she was at war with these vicious people and she has to protect her family. I asked, "Who really wins at war?" She agreed that in combat both sides suffer. I suggested that she think about changing her metaphor to a game instead ("litigation is a game")... maybe something like playing your hand well.

As she considered the shift in metaphor, I watched her expression softened immediately. The next day, she called to thank me because she was able to approach the legal case with a bit more ease and was able to find new evidence that helped their case.

I propose that the same approach can be applied to coaching others during stressful business situations. A shift

in metaphors can change the way one approaches the circumstance. It also brings attention to our conceptualizations to perhaps find a way to neutralize unproductive emotions.

Summary

Metaphors enhance our knowledge and help us to understand the complex world around us. We speak and think in metaphors without conscious awareness. Placing one's attention towards listening and identifying the source and target domains of conceptual metaphors can improve communications, self-reflection, and professional development. When organization development professionals employ conceptual metaphor analysis techniques they bring an added dimension into understanding organization culture and the impacts of change.

I proposed a number of practical applications but by no means suggest that these are all-inclusive. There are many other practical uses of metaphors in organizational and leadership development that are not addressed here. It is noted that the use of metaphors in organization development will need further investigation and empirical research into the effectiveness of these applications. However, I posit that powerful metaphors can move help to mountains of obstacles to organizational change. Harnessing metaphorical power can facilitate positive organizational change and strengthen leaders' abilities to lead.

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Mary Jean Vignone, PhD, is an Institute of Social Innovation Fellow at Fielding Graduate University and Senior VP of Learning & Development for a regional bank. She also consults with other organizations to facilitate strategic change initiatives and board retreats. She received her PhD from Fielding and a MBA from California Lutheran University. She can be reached at mjvignone@ureach.com.

“In contrast to the reflective rigor one might expect from a discipline that asks such reflection from its clients, OD evaluations have provided largely anecdotal information; criteria for success has been subjective and testimonial in nature.”

Quantifying Qualitative OD Results

Dispelling the Touchy-feely Stigma

By Lisa Nielsen

I was at a dinner party recently, and the question came up, as it invariably always does, what do you do? I hate this question. My background is in psychology, but that declaration has a tendency to make others squeamish, fearing an unwelcomed psychoanalysis. When I discovered Organization Development (OD), not only was I happy to have a new, less fear-inducing, response to this common question, I was thrilled to find a discipline that would enable me to continue the work I was passionate about, such as working with role clarification, effective communication and congruency, but in the workplace. However, as I progressed in my networking and exploration of OD, I discovered that OD has a stigma of being touchy-feely, or “soft.” When I respond to the standard opening inquiry that I am an OD practitioner, the reaction is most often, “what’s that?” or “oh, you do team building.”

OD has a branding problem; very few people know who we are or understand what it is that we do. There is a common perception in the business world of OD as a soft skill, i.e., a communication, conflict resolution, or teamwork tool. It is not recognized by top executives as contributing to the bottom line, or as being a source of revenue generation or cost-reduction. While many OD practitioners might argue that soft skills are critical to the bottom line, at present, “executives ignore OD or relegate it to the bowels of the organization” (Bradford & Burke, 2005, p. 7). Here I see a pending danger: all of the ways OD can contribute to the longevity and health of the organization are not translated into

a language that business executives speak. To reach the level where budgets are drawn and strategies planned, OD practitioners must learn to translate results into “the language of how profit is made and costs contained according to various business models” (p. 8). Otherwise the tremendous value of OD work remains unseen, unheard, and undervalued.

I decided to research what can be done to change this. How can the OD field raise its credibility to be thought of as a partner in strategic change efforts? I suspected OD had to learn the language that is indisputable in the business world: quantitative hard data.

Generating objective data and financial figures requires an analysis of results. Oddly, the field of OD does not have an extensive history of evaluation; the quality, scarcity, and validity of its evaluations have been criticized since the field’s inception. In contrast to the reflective rigor one might expect from a discipline that asks such reflection from its clients, OD evaluations have provided largely anecdotal information; criteria for success has been subjective and testimonial in nature. How can this be, when evaluation provides an opportunity for OD practitioners to continually learn from their experiences and to catalyze the evolution and refinement of their tools and skills; is not continual learning a core OD value? As Lewin (1946) wrote:

If we have no criteria for evaluating the relation between effort and achievement, there is nothing to prevent us from making the wrong

conclusion and to encourage the wrong work habits. Realistic fact-finding and evaluation is a prerequisite for any learning. (p. 35)

Given that evaluation is proclaimed to be valued by OD founding figures such as Lewin and can enhance perceptions of its critical importance, I decided to speak to established consultants who work for metric-centric organizations that have a reputation for rigor and being data-driven: Boeing, Kaiser, Motorola, Agilent, etc, hoping they would be able to provide some insight on evaluation options for OD practitioners.

This article presents the results of research that examines what types of OD intervention evaluations are currently being utilized in the field of OD and what avenues for further development may be useful. The research also briefly explores why evaluation has not become standard procedure in OD and how this void potentially affects the OD field's ability to sustain itself in a changing business marketplace.

Background

Despite Lewin's urging for evaluation in 1946, published literature indicates that early attempts to conduct OD intervention evaluations were not highly successful and received considerable criticism. According to Vicars and Hartke (1984):

When systematic evaluations have been attempted, for the most part they have had serious methodological weakness: Limited use of control groups, focus on short-term changes, and lack of independent evaluations are three in particular that have been complained about frequently by OD critics. (p. 177)

Vicars and Hartke's (1984) research was inspired by an assertion by Morrison (1978): "The studies of OD evaluations published to date do not conform to established criteria for internal and external validity for effective social science research and evaluation" (p. 65). Vicars and Hartke re-tested published OD evaluations, using

Morrison's criteria, which were based on Campbell and Stanley's (1963) Twelve Threats to Validity, as criteria of the quality of evaluation research designs, and found no significant improvement.

In an attempt to discover what was blocking successful OD evaluations, Armenakis, Field, and Holley (1976) surveyed 269 members of the Organization Development Network to ascertain the evaluation challenges of OD practitioners. They discovered, "The problem most frequently encountered by these change agents was the difficulty in selecting and quantitatively measuring 'soft' criteria" (p. 1151). The second most frequently cited problem was the difficulty in employing comparison groups to evaluate change.

The Influence of Positivism on Evaluation Methodology

Early OD evaluations were based on the model of empirical testing developed by psychologists such as Carl Stumpf, who mentored Kurt Lewin at the University of Berlin in 1916. Empirical testing roots trace back over a thousand years to the scientific method. Much of the orientation of the scientific method can be summarized by the epistemology of positivism, a belief that only that which is based on sense experience and positive verification can be considered authentic knowledge. "The whole premise of data-based change (for example, action research and survey research methods) presumes the existence and validity of an objective, discernable reality" (Marshak, 2005, p. 25).

Since much of modern OD practice is based on post-modern thought and ontological theories of social construction, which stand in stark contrast to positivism, this research asks: Is there a methodology to evaluate OD interventions that would suit the discipline more aptly than traditional empirical testing?

Research Design

A qualitative, phenomenological research method was used to investigate what type of evaluations current OD practitioners utilize to measure the impact

of their interventions within organizations. Research participants were pursued through a purposeful selection method to form an eight person panel. The participants had 5–30 years experience; 50% had experience as internal and external consultants, 50% solely internal; and their employers included: Kaiser Foundation Health Plan, Motorola, Agilent (formerly HP), Fosters Estates, Implementation Management Associates, Boeing, and a "Big Four" accounting/advisory firm.

All of the participants were asked the same 15 interview questions; however, differing follow-up questions were asked for clarification purposes. All interviews lasted approximately one hour.

Data Analysis

Analysis of the data was pursued through a coding and thematic analysis approach with a design strategy based on the Action Research Model. Quotes were selected from each interview that captured the speaker's salient points and were able to stand alone and hold meaning. These quotes were anonymously placed on a wall and grouped into related categories to identify emerging cross-subject themes for analysis and discussion.

Each participant was asked the same set of questions in the following four areas:

1. The respondent's background and the level at which they typically enter organizations
2. The discussion of "success expectations" with new clients during the contracting phase
3. Post-engagement evaluation habits
4. Reflective questions regarding establishing credibility with new clients

Findings

Initially, interviewees were specifically chosen for their involvement in large, metric-centric corporations, with a hypothesis that these practitioners may be the pioneers who could point toward innovative evaluation technologies. However, it was discovered during the interviews that evaluation practices, even amongst this esteemed coterie, are scarce or subjective in nature.

The major themes that arose from the interviews are:

- » What evaluation methods are being utilized?
 - Existing metrics
 - Tracking milestones
- » What gets in the way?
 - Evaluation is complicated, time consuming, and expensive
 - It's the client's job
- » What is done instead?
 - Demonstrate business acumen and language
 - Form "partnerships" with clients

Existing Metrics

Often times, the first thing respondents identified when speaking of methods used to evaluate the results of their interventions was reliance upon pre-existing metrics within the organization such as sales figures, employee satisfaction survey results, inventory numbers, employee retention, attrition rates, leadership scores, and cycle-times.

While not all organizations track figures, most respondents (R) felt that "ideally the client has a set of metrics in place we can use" (R#3). Utilizing existing metrics was described to be ideal because it eliminates designing and conducting an extensive evaluation process, and secondly because if the client is already tracking these figures, the consultants presume these figures are important to the client and more likely to be meaningful.

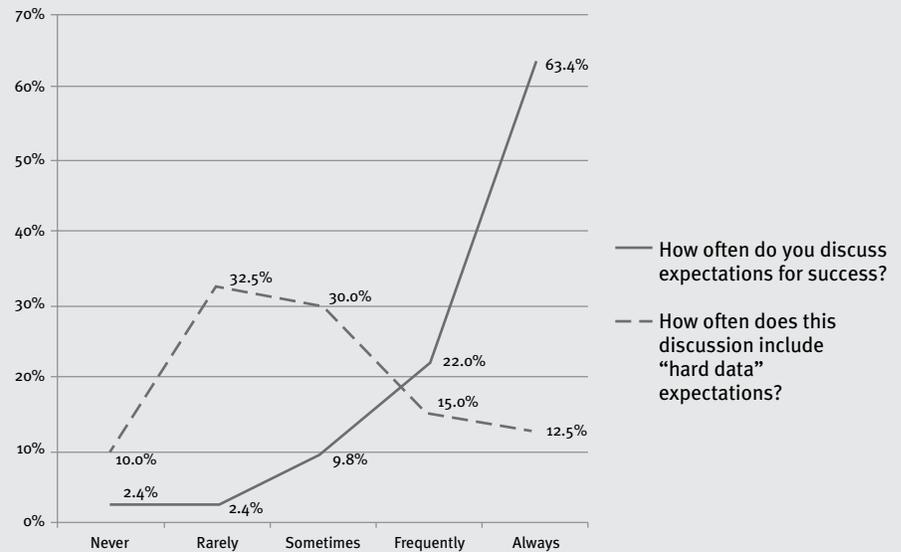
Tracking Milestones

Interview respondents stated that they often rely upon achievement of key milestones or deliverables to track the success of a project. Sometimes "evaluation" is simply a question of, "Did it get accomplished?" Commonly indicated milestones include "typical life-cycle stages: design phase, delivery, implementation, modification" (R#7), and examining whether these stages were reached and completed.

Evaluation is Complicated, Time Consuming, and Expensive

Frequently, when asked about evaluation techniques, interviewees instead responded

Figure 1: Discussing Expectations for Success During Contracting



with reasons evaluation does not always happen. All of the interviewees shared the observation of R#2: "One of the problems with measurement is that there are so many other contributing factors."

Others cited challenges to evaluation are time and money restraints: "People are just not going to spend a lot of money on measurement because senior leaders are all about installation and then on to the next thing. Strategy design is much sexier than measurement" (R#6).

It's the Client's Job

An additional theory was offered by several interviewees that evaluation of the effectiveness of OD interventions is "nearly impossible because I've stepped into what they [the client] want to take credit for" (R#4).

Not all interviewees indicated that they experienced evaluation resistance from the client. Many respondents, however—particularly the external consultants—expressed that the evaluation is the responsibility of the client: "they handle that part internally" (R#7).

Demonstrate Business Acumen and Language

Since evaluation was largely described to be inconsistent or problematic, what happens instead? How do consultants establish credibility with their clients? Many of the interviewees described their ability to establish rapport through their initial scoping

conversations, demonstrating to potential clients that they understood their business concern or impediment and were able to knowledgably converse about solutions. "I've got to be able to speak their [clients'] language and understand what their issues are. I don't need to be a technical expert, but I need familiarity" (R#8).

Form Partnerships with Clients

Another factor often described by respondents was the propensity to continually check-in with the client throughout the engagement asking, "is this on target?" tracking success by relying upon the client's subjective sense of the project's usefulness. Almost every interviewee echoed this sentiment: "If I start with, 'how can I help you be successful?' people want to work with that" (R#1).

Research Augmentation Results

In addition to the phenomenological interview data collection, a ten-question anonymous online survey was designed and distributed to OD professional networks. Fifty-four voluntary respondents replied. Much of what was discovered during the interviews also surfaced in the anonymous survey results. Seventeen percent of the respondents reported that the majority of their work has been as an internal consultant. Fifty-nine percent report that the majority of their consulting work has been external and 24% stated that they have

Figure 2: What methods (check all that apply) do you use to evaluate results of your engagements?

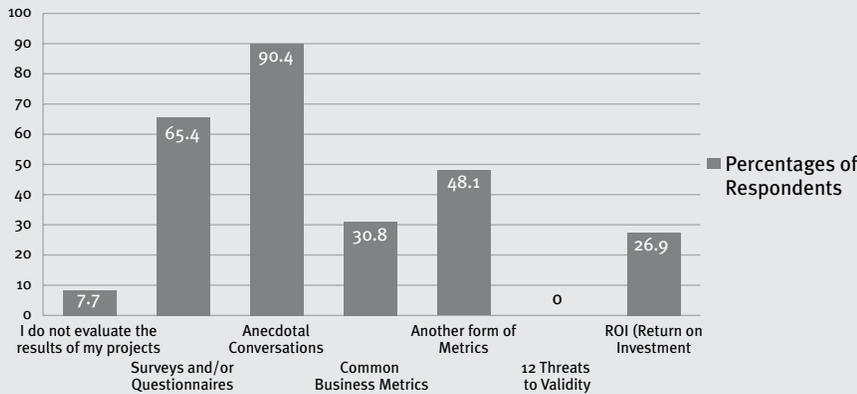
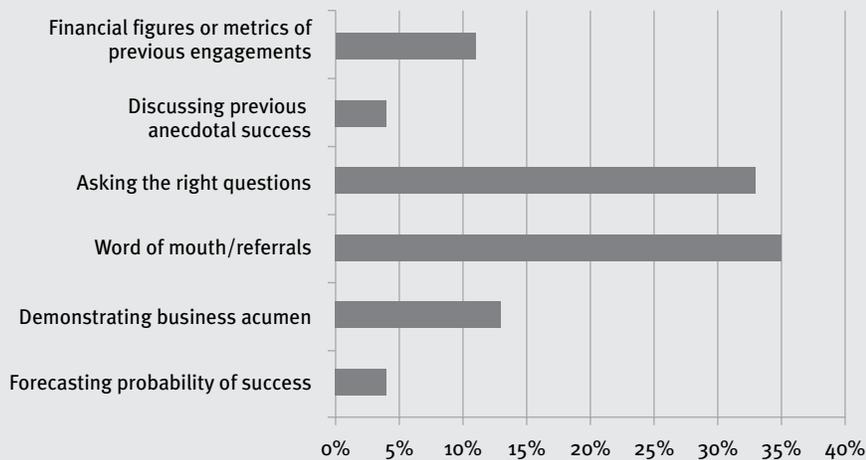


Figure 3: How do you establish credibility when contracting with a new client?



consulted in a combination of internal and external roles.

Sixty-three percent of practitioners reported that they always discuss expectations for success; however, only 13% responded that discussions include hard data (see Figure 1).

When asked what method practitioners use to evaluate the results of their projects, frequently used form of analysis was anecdotal conversations (see Figure 2).

When asked how practitioners establish credibility with new clients, only 11% believed having financial figures or metrics of previous engagements is essential to establishing credibility with new clients (see Figure 3).

As evidenced in the data, the majority of practitioner respondents rely upon anecdotal conversations and subjective surveys as evaluative measures, strikingly similar to

the research findings of Vicars and Hartke (1984). While this data pool is limited and not considered to be representative of the entire population of OD practitioners, the data is consistent with current criticisms and concerns of OD practices. The apparent lack of objective analysis or hard data reveals how OD acquired the stigma of being touchy-feely and/or soft.

Subjective Analysis vs. Objective Analysis

Thirty-one respondents replied to an open-ended question in the online survey: “How do you know the difference between a successful intervention/engagement and an unsuccessful one?” Answers were coded into three categories of: clearly subjective, unclear, and clearly objective. Only 6% were classified as objective, while the bulk of responses (61%) relied upon

the subjective perceptions of the client. Respondents cited answers such as how the client or stakeholder “feels,” the “level of energy,” or a “palpable” level of change; descriptions that are not units of measurement that can be verified by third parties.

The subjective anecdotal nature of evaluative methods by current OD practitioners may help explain why many of the interview respondents reported that reaching project milestones is often substituted for tracking achievement of pre-determined hard data results. However, this approach of, “Did we do it?” versus “How well did we do it?” does not examine the quality or effectiveness of the intervention. “Isn’t one of the key purposes of OD consultation to help human beings see where their position may lead to ineffective action?” (Argyris, 2005, p. 118).

Inductive Reasoning on the Lack of Objective Evaluation Practices

Argyris (1990) argues that people utilize subjective defensive reasoning to protect human beings and their systems from threat. Perhaps he is correct that there is a sense of security in not being held accountable by the objective measurement of hard data. The role of client/consultant “partnership” was heavily emphasized in the interviews as a critical factor to success. A side-effect of partnership is a loophole for accountability, and perhaps consultants are not eager to eliminate that loophole.

There is also an inverse hypothesis, a conveyed sense of humbleness, which surfaced in a third of the interviews. Consultants seemed to believe the credit for that success was not theirs to take. As one interviewee remarked, “My job is to make other people look good” (R#4). Many consultants spoke of approaching their clients with an “I’m here to help you attitude.” This attitude illuminates the source of the theme “Evaluation is the Clients’ Job,” assumedly due to a belief that achievements should be credited to the client. Again, this may also contain a shadow side indicated by Argyris (1990) of the safety provided to the consultant in lack of ownership.

There is a third hypothesis to explain why objective evaluations are not

common. Perhaps the ideological lineage of our epistemology leads to encouraging a type of empirically based evaluation practice, as represented in Campbell and Stanley's (1963) Twelve Threats to Validity, which simply is not a good fit for the practice of OD.

Organizations and teams are ubiquitously unique; this is a problem for empirical evaluation. The conflicts, history, member status dynamics, friendships—all the incredibly intricate ingredients that comprise group dynamics are impossible to replicate in a control group. It is impossible to attain two identical groups. It stands to reason then, that early attempts at evaluation were highly prone to criticism when held against validity threats. And because, as Behaviorists would argue, humans are not prone to maintain doing what they know is not working; it is no surprise that the practice of evaluation in OD engagements atrophied.

What Can Be Done?

A recent publication by Morris, Storberg-Walker, and McMillian (2009) advocates developing an "OD-Intervention Metric System" with the use of an applied theory building method to examine work/life balance issues. The study claims to adopt a systems view of human capital to evaluate the financial return on investments (ROI) of work/life interventions.

It is interesting to compare the standard for "metrics" versus the standard for empirical evaluation. According to Becker, Huselid, and Ulrich (2001) metrics possess credibility, can be believed by a reasonable person, have meaningfulness, are legitimate and accurate, reliable and valid, and possess strategic value for the end user. Typical metric categories consist of: volume, quantity, cost, income, time, quality, stakeholder reaction, rate, ratio, and categories or levels.

Missing from this list of metric requirements is the need for control groups and absolute elimination of internal and external validity threats, as is required in empirical testing. Metrics allow much more freedom and flexibility and yet their credibility is not questioned. Quite the

opposite, projected financial figures are often the foundation of critical strategic decision making.

One example of this is the common return on investment (ROI) measurement. While the ROI is a simplistic instrument, it is widely accepted as a useful metric to measure performance. Validity threats are not viewed as prohibitive from conducting evaluation and drawing correlations. It does not have the precision of empirical science, yet it provides a useful evaluation framework. While an ROI evaluation is certainly not a blanket answer, it is an

The philosophical humanistic underpinnings of OD, such as emphasis on self-awareness, communication, authenticity, inclusion, and collaboration bring a perspective into the workplace that enriches lives and serves to counter-balance the profit-centered approach of the modern economy. However, if we cannot adapt to translate these contributions into a language the current external environments speaks and values, the reach and impact of OD will decline. OD practitioners need to pay attention to this risk and bring it into the collective narrative.

indication that there may be other forms of evaluative methods than the OD community has not embraced.

Quantifying the Qualitative

As noted by the OD practitioners surveyed on the challenges of OD evaluations, the most frequently cited difficulty was quantitatively measuring soft criteria (Armenakis et al., 1976). Fortunately, new developments are being made in this area. In a study titled *The Role of Positivity and Connectivity in the Performance of Business Teams*, researchers Losada and Heaphy (2004) coded the verbal communication of business teams, measuring the frequency of approving Positive (P) statements versus disapproving Negative (N) statements. This coding established a P/N ratio which was found to have a statistically significant correlation with the team's performance level. The work of Losada and Heaphy (2004)

is an excellent example of the quantitative research void the OD field needs to fill to establish its credibility and relevancy to the business community. As Beer (1976) lamented, "OD suffers from an inability to demonstrate the relevance of its interventions. We desperately need research aimed at developing a technology for quantifying, in organizationally relevant terms (profits, services, good will, market competitiveness, innovations, etc.), the results of changes created" (p. 50).

Additional support for this type of metric creation has also been pioneered

by Henri Saval and Veronique Zardet, who founded the Socio-Economic Approach to Management (SEAM) interventions, which aims to capture hidden costs, such as absenteeism, rework, and missed opportunities that are not captured in traditional accounting (Conbere & Heorhiadi, 2011).

Systemic Implications

Organizations exist within a larger environment that impacts their well-being and ability to survive. Shifting environmental conditions are identified through an active feedback loop filtering between the organization and its environment that measures sales, buying trends, customer satisfaction, available resources, competition, etc. Organizations that choose to ignore these shifting environments tend to lack the ability to adapt and survive. The field of OD is not above or apart from these external environmental realities.

Implications for OD Practitioners

It is clear that the field of OD can strengthen its presence in several ways. Much of this responsibility falls on individual OD practitioners. For example, during client engagements, determining a mutually agreed upon goal and means of distinguishing and measuring traction, is essential before beginning the project. Ideally, this would be a metric that can be measured objectively, drawing from the metric categories listed above or inspired by a SMART goal: specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound.

This shift in contracting behavior requires spending time to define qualitative aspirations. Often success goals are established such as “increased communication” or “reduced conflict.” However, objective parameters need to be specified to measure when communication has increased and how much conflict has been reduced. “In a very basic way, every project is about reconciling the fundamental polarity between the world of What-Is-Needed and the world of What-Can-Be-Built” (Conklin, 2006, p. 16). What-is-needed might be “energized innovation” or an “improved level of employee engagement”; but these are aspirations that have no ceiling for achievement. A conversation to balance these what-is-needed items must be accompanied with an honest what-can-be-built perspective. Energized innovation might be objectively tracked by the number of employee contributions, engineering design submissions, item-to-market ratios, or number of new products released to market. Employee engagement might track attrition levels, employee satisfaction surveys, or numbers of colleague referrals.

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The OD field’s lack of adaptation to the marketplace’s orientation indicates there is a critical feedback loop in our own systemic model that is dangerously underdeveloped. We are not listening and adapting to the larger community upon whose resources we rely for survival. As practitioners, we need to figure out how to capture the qualitative shifts that occur during an OD intervention and translate them into quantitative examples. It is self-sabotage to remain elitist in our language and our values. The client and the greater community’s values, such as profit, must enter into our thinking and design if this field is to stay relevant and not become extinct.

The feedback loop needs to be repaired and strengthened. This discussion needs to enter our conferences and professional gatherings. Contemporary evaluation instruments need to enter our research focus. Business acumen and results evaluation need to be incorporated into graduate programs’ curriculum, and finally, as practitioners, we need to strive for dedicated personal accountability during our own engagements.

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Lisa Nielsen, MA, provides strategic solutions to address the people challenges associated with organization change. Recently completing a second Master’s degree in Organization Development, she currently resides in the San Francisco Bay Area and works for Capgemini Consulting. She has lived as a yoga instructor in Costa Rica, backpacked throughout India, and owned a pie company in Vermont. She can be reached at lnielsenvt@yahoo.com.

“The more I began to understand these two views of the world and of change, the more I realized not only the cross-cultural implications but the inherent limitations of the ‘pure’ OD model.”

From the ODP Archive

The Tao of Change Redux

By Robert J. Marshak

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Re-Introduction

In 1993-94 following a series of business trips to Korea and subsequent self-study of traditional Chinese philosophy, I wrote two articles suggesting that organizational change might usefully be thought of as a cyclical and continuous process rather than a linear and episodic one (Marshak, 1993b & 1994). At the time I was noticing shifts in the tempo and demands for change in the organizations I consulted with and found the Lewinian model of change still useful, but somehow limited. I was also intrigued by my Korean experiences with the possibility that the change models used in OD practice might be more culturally bound then recognized at the time. I further wished to raise the possibility that useful insights and ideas about consulting and change could come from nontraditional sources outside of North America and Europe. In the ensuing years some of the core insights revealed to me at that time through study of another culture and its founding philosophies have been recognized and expanded upon by others, for example writings about continuous versus episodic change (Weick & Quinn, 1999) and self-organizing, complex adaptive systems (Olson & Eoyang, 2001). The original article is next, followed by additional reflections in a postscript.

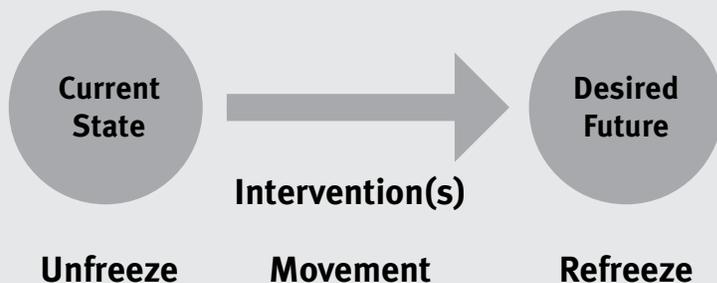
The Tao of Change

After more than 40 years of searching for the Promised Land of “desired end states,” perhaps it is time OD as a profession started thinking about “going around in circles.” This somewhat surprising conclusion came to me following a recently completed personal odyssey.

The focus of this article is on East-West assumptions about change, after previous speculation about culturally based differences in East-West learning styles (see Marshak, 1993a). The stimulus for both articles was the same: a series of training/consulting trips to South Korea during 1990-1991. Those trips came exactly 20 years after spending 47 weeks in intensive Korean language training before being stationed near the DMZ between North and South Korea. After leaving military service and Korea at the end of 1971 to resume graduate studies in OD, I thought I would never return; that my training and immersion into another language and culture had been mostly lost time.

When I eventually returned to Korea at the beginning of the 1990s, the changes were really remarkable, but none more so than my cross-cultural experiences related to change theory. I was scheduled to present a seminar on the “Strategic Management of Change,” including developmental and transformational change. But just before leaving the United States, my Korean host called to tell me I was presenting on “management innovation,” not “transformational change.” When I inquired why, he explained: “Because

Figure 1: The OD Model of Change



there is really no word in the Korean language for transformational change the way you mean it.” When I asked: “How do you say the caterpillar changed into the butterfly?” He replied: “In Korean, we say the caterpillar *becomes* the butterfly.” He then went on to say that many of the Korean words/concepts associated with “transformational change” also carried negative connotations of violent revolution, loss of social order, dissolution, and the like. That telephone conversation, combined with later experiences discussing change and change concepts with Korean managers and trainers, convinced me I needed more than a good English-Korean dictionary to really understand the differences in how change can be viewed on each side of the Pacific Ocean.

Change: The Perspectives from East and West

The clues to my questions regarding change somehow were located in the cultural roots of Korea and East Asia. Because Korea, like most of East Asia, is a post-Confucian society, my curiosity led me to the great Chinese sage, Confucius (K’ung Fu-Tzu, 551-479 BCE) and Confucian/Neo-Confucian philosophy. Along the way I learned, among other things, that the *I Ching (Book of Changes, circa 1143 BCE)* is one of the five classics of Confucian philosophy and that, by attribution and legend, Confucius himself wrote the first philosophical commentaries that are incorporated as part of the text. I also learned much more about *yin* and *yang*,

and the five forces of wood, fire, earth, metal, and water as primary concepts in Neo-Confucian philosophy. Most important, I discovered an entirely different world view about the universe and about change. Furthermore, the more I began to understand the Confucian world view, the more clearly I came to understand, through contrast, my own world view based primarily in Judeo-Christian, Greco-Roman, and European Enlightenment (e.g., Descartes and Newton) beliefs, assumptions, and concepts.

My intention now is to provide a glimpse of these two views of change as I have come to understand them, and my thoughts about some of the potential implications for OD theory and practice. A more in-depth discussion and analysis of these two models is available elsewhere (Marshak, 1993b).

Change: The OD Perspective

The primary model of change underlying most OD theory and practice is Kurt Lewin’s three-stage change process of unfreezing, movement, and refreezing (Lewin, 1947). This model is in the tradition of the Western, scientific world view that presumes linear time, progressive evolution, free will, and the preeminence of rationality (see, for example, Tarnas, 1991). This world view also contains an inherent dualism, including the belief that human beings exist independent of a mostly static phenomenal world that they plan, manage, and otherwise act on. In terms of conceptualizing a change effort, this world

view and change model imply a managed process to move from a current state to a more desired future state through the use of planned interventions to overcome resistance, get movement, and thereby alter the status quo. This is shown in *Figure 1*.

The assumptions inherent in this approach/model include beliefs that change is:

1. Linear. One moves from one state to another state in a forward direction.
2. Progressive. One moves from a less to a more desired state.
3. Destination oriented. One moves toward a specific goal or end state.
4. Based on creating disequilibrium. In order to get movement from the current state, one must alter the equilibrium of the status quo.
5. Planned and managed by people who exist separate from and act on things to achieve their goals. One learns the principles and practices about how to master and/or facilitate the forces in the world in order to achieve preferred outcomes.
6. Unusual, because everything is normally in a quasi-stationary or static state. Unless something is done proactively, things will tend to stay the same. After all, according to Newton’s First Law of Motion, a body at rest stays at rest unless force is applied.

This way of thinking about change is so much a part of OD theory and practice, and the cultural milieu from which it was created, that I never thought twice about these underlying assumptions until I discovered a world view based on a different set of assumptions.

Change: The Confucian Perspective

Underlying both Confucian and Taoist philosophy is an alternative world view that presumes the inherent oneness, or interdependence, of everything and everyone in the universe. All are governed by the universal principles of the Way (the *Tao*), including the principle of continual cyclical alternation between the polarities inherent in everything (*yin* and *yang*). In terms of change, this world view is represented by

the images of the *T'ai Chi* (the union of *yin* and *yang*) and the *Wu Hsing* (the ordered cyclical relationship among the five forces of the universe represented by wood, fire, earth, metal, and water). These are shown in *Figure 2*.

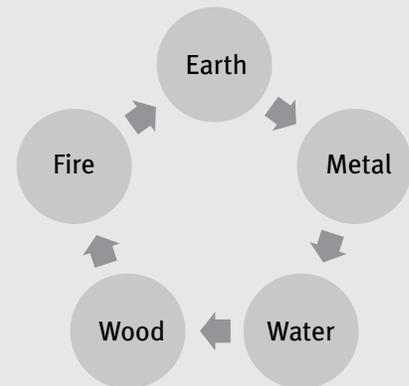
In brief, everyone and everything in the universe is part of on-going processes of cyclical change. Therefore people, who are interdependent with everything else, must observe and align themselves with the on-going cyclical changes in order to maintain the natural harmony, equilibrium, and perfection of the universe.

The assumptions inherent in this approach/model include beliefs that change is:

1. Cyclical. There is a constant ebb and flow to the universe and everything in it is cyclical.
2. Processional. Everything and everyone moves constantly from one condition/form/state to the next condition/form/state in an orderly sequence through a cycle.
3. Journey oriented. Because there is continual cyclical change, there can be no end state, per se. What matters is how well one conducts the journey, i.e., follows the Way.
4. Based on restoring/maintaining equilibrium. Everything is naturally in harmony and perfect. Therefore, one acts only when and how needed to restore balance and equilibrium.
5. Observed and followed by people who are one with everything, and must act correctly to maintain harmony in the universe. One must constantly strive to be in harmony with the Way, the natural order of the universe.
6. Usual, because everything is normally in a continually changing dynamic state. The continual process of everything in the universe is change. The Yin-Yang Law of Opposites says everything contains its own negation, so nothing stays the same forever.

This dynamic, interdependent, cyclical world view has formed Chinese and East Asian ways of thinking and acting for millennia. It is also the foundation for such practices as traditional Chinese medicine

Figure 2: The *T'ai Chi* and *Wu Hsing*



(e.g., acupuncture), martial arts (e.g., *T'ai Chi Chuan*), and geomancy (*Feng Shui*). Needless to say, in a dynamic, cyclical world, day becomes night, honor becomes shame, loss becomes gain, death becomes birth, and the “caterpillar becomes the butterfly”—naturally.

Reflections

The more I began to understand these two views of the world and of change, the more I realized not only the cross-cultural implications but the inherent limitations of the “pure” OD model. While I know OD practitioners are eclectic, inventive, and rarely bound by any model, still I had previously known of no alternative paradigm to guide dramatically different ways of acting and intervening. Besides, a model of change that specifically addressed a world of continual change seemed intriguing after dealing with the paradox of how to unfreeze and refreeze “permanent white water” (Vaill, 1989). When I then began to consider the implications of each model of change, several meta-themes emerged. These seemed to follow logically from the assumptions underlying each model and help to contrast the two differing world views.

Implications: The OD Change Model

I believe the assumptions underlying the Lewinian model of change are likely to lead to several tendencies in the theory and

practice of Organization Development. These include the following orientations:

Focusing on the Future. Emphasis is placed on the desired future state where the problems of the past and present will be resolved and/or transformed. This tends to produce a future bias wherein most of the attention and activities focus on creating a compelling image of the future and forgetting or getting away from the past and present.

(Clients) Holding on to a Satisfactory Present. Paradoxically, because one is supposed to move (change) only when there is a clearly better alternative, clients may want to hold on to the present state, particularly if it is satisfactory and/or better than all known options. After all, why should anyone want to move to a downsized, pressurized, highly competitive future? This is especially true when—as this view of change implies—you do not have to move unless “forced” to do so.

Focusing on Overcoming Resistance. In order to change, resistance to movement (inertia) must be overcome, usually by altering the field of forces. Holding on to the present tends to be viewed (by change agents) as resistance. The intervention approach, as a result, focuses on ways to overcome the resistant forces/persons. This, in essence, ends up casting the change effort as a win-lose conflict between

the forces of movement and the forces of inertia.

Thinking in Terms of Either/Or. A tendency toward dichotomous either/or thinking is created and reinforced by several dynamics. By far the most important is the inherent dualism embedded in the change model and most Western thinking since at least Descartes. In dualism, entities are considered to be not only different but separate and independent of each other as well. For example, one may choose the current state or a future state, but not both. Finally, in an either/or dualistic world, when the future is presumed to be better and therefore good, the present must be unsatisfactory and therefore bad. Thus, in a blink of the eye a change effort can become a drama between the forces of good seeking to establish a more progressive, preferred future and the forces of evil seeking to maintain the flawed current state.

Planning and Managing. Because change (movement) results when something is acted on, it is possible to choose what to change and how to change it. To insure you get what you want, it is appropriate and necessary to plan and manage your actions. Planning and managing movement toward the desired future state also presumes both dualism and causality. A separate, independent entity (change agent) acts on/with (intervenes) another separate, independent entity (client system) and thereby causes (facilitates) movement (change).

Thinking Analytically. Good analysis is needed in order to anticipate, plan, manage, and/or deal correctly with the myriad factors and forces that must be considered in order to successfully move to the desired future state. Analytic thinking, i.e., the separation of a whole into parts, is the preferred way to plan and manage because entities are conceived to be separate and independent and to act on each other causally. Remember even Lewin equated planned change with social engineering (Lewin, 1951, p. 172).

Intervening Based on Reason and Logic. Intervention choices are supposed to be

made on the basis of reason and logic, i.e., rationally. Interventions should be data (fact) and theory (premises) based, using reasoned logic to infer conclusions about appropriate actions. Emotional and unconscious forces may be addressed, as long as they are surfaced, named, and then worked (in a rational manner). Interventions based on emotionality, spirituality, intuition, instinct, and/or feelings are suspect, because such factors are presumed to detract from “pure” reason and logic. It is no accident that action research is the name given to the core methodology of OD. Action research involves, in essence, an iterative, systematic, participatory process, using data-based reason and logic, to address and resolve systemic issues.

Measuring Progress. Because the implicit theme of most change efforts is to move toward a more desired future state, ways to measure “progress” become integral to the change process. Progress can be measured in many dimensions, the more the better. These include distance traveled (milestones and gaps), speed and time (how fast and how long), increases in things (e.g., more money, markets, productivity, quality, effectiveness, satisfaction, etc.), and decreases in things (e.g., less cost, time, defects, problems, turnover, etc.). Inability to measure “progress” on at least one dimension becomes, therefore, a valid reason to question whether or not a change is needed, possible, or has occurred.

These tendencies, if left to their own excesses, can conspire to create scenarios wherein change efforts become win-lose struggles between the forces of progress and the forces of stagnation. The forces of progress will try to use superior planning, management, analysis, and reason to overcome the resistance and defenses of the forces of stagnation who seek to hold on to the current flawed conditions by being emotional, irrational, or demanding concrete, measurable proof before they will even consider movement.

Implications: the Cyclical Change Model

In contrast, the Confucian cyclical change model generates an alternative set of

tendencies. These will be described and contrasted with aspects of the OD change model to help highlight salient differences. The cyclical change model is likely to lead to the following orientations:

Focusing on the Past-Present-Future. In a cyclical change model becoming and transformation are continual processes. To understand the present requires understanding the past from which it emerged and the future it is becoming. The future in turn will soon become the present and then the past. As a result, diagnosis and intervention must focus on the entire past-present-future cycle, rather than being primarily concerned with getting to the future. Origins and legacies, the pattern(s) and procession of change, and knowing where one is in a cycle of becoming and transformation are all as important as focusing on the future.

Letting Go and Aligning With the Emerging Future. In a cyclical-processional model of change, every condition/form/state is presumed to be both a beginning and an ending. Furthermore, no condition/form/state is considered to be better than another. They are just different, and all are needed to maintain the balance, harmony, and equilibrium necessary to keep things moving in a dynamic universe. As a result, the dominant orientation is less on “holding on” to a desired (end) state, and more toward “letting go” in order to “join up” (align) with a newly emerging state. In short, how to maintain balance and equilibrium while aligning with a newly emerging situation becomes the principal concern.

Focusing on the Relationships Needed to Maintain Balance and Harmony. Attention is focused on balance and harmony as necessary requirements to maintain the dynamic equilibrium of continuous, cyclical change. One does not “overcome resistance” so much as one looks to “release blockages” or “re-balance relationships” in order to maintain harmony and equilibrium among the constantly changing aspects of a system. In addition, the win-lose dynamics that often emerge from an “overcome resistance” orientation are

replaced by the recognition that “coordination-collaboration” is essential for maintaining balance in a constantly changing universe

Thinking in Terms of Both/And. Recognition of the need for continual coordination-collaboration helps contribute to syncretic both/and thinking. More important, however, is the concept of monism (“all is one”) that is inherent to the cyclical change model and most East Asian traditional philosophies. In a monistic universe there may be different aspects/manifestations, but all are interdependent and essentially one. This is most strongly represented by the polarity of *yin* and *yang* wherein each creates and is created by the other, and both are aspects of the *T'ai Chi*, the Great Ultimate. Consequently, in a monistic universe one cannot “win out over” or negate another without negating oneself. Thus, for example, the orientation is not past vs. present vs. future, but rather the relative balance and emphasis of each. How much of our history and traditions will be part of our future, given where we are (in an on-going cycle)? What new traditions do we wish to create in the future so they will become part of our on-going legacies? What if our thinking and acting were guided by simultaneous consideration of our past, present and anticipated future? From this view, a change process is a continual dance among polarities where attention to balance, harmony, grace, and natural movement becomes the focus.

Self-Renewing Through Release and Augmentation. In a dynamic cyclical model of change, attention is focused on maintaining balance and harmony during the inherent changes so that the appropriate next condition/ form/state in the cycle will be fully and properly realized. As a result, efforts related to release and augmentation (letting go and adding on) become critical. Also, because the universe is monistic and therefore interconnected and interdependent, no thing/person acts on another thing/person. All action and change is self-generated. The concept of causality is replaced by self-renewal or self-cultivation. In short, when interdependent aspects

(clients and consultants) act to maintain on-going balance and harmony in a system (release and augmentation interventions) there will be natural self-renewal (change). For a related discussion, see Land and Jarman (1992).

Thinking Holistically. A cycle is a circle, and circles are inherently holistic. All is part of, or contained within, the circle. One is immediately and constantly conscious of the whole and the parts. This differs from a linear orientation where the tendency is to focus on one end (aspect) or the

When everything is interdependent and self-creating, the ability to maintain proper balance and harmony throughout the continual change processes is essential. This calls for holistic thinking, seeing the patterns and relationships as well as the parts. This means more than just seeing the forest and the trees; it also means seeing the natural ecosystem that is the forest and the interrelationships and balance among all aspects of the forest throughout the seasons and years. Consequently, diagnosis and intervention must constantly stress a holistic, systemic orientation.

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Intervening Based on Artistry and Composition. Because everything is self-evolving, holistic, and must be in balance and harmony for optimal conditions to

prevail, interventions are based more on artistry and composition than on pure reason and logic. In essence, the logic of artistic composition, rather than the logic of scientific research, guides actions (see Hall and Ames, 1987). Factors, forces, values, thoughts, feelings, moods, etc., are all constituent elements that, in combination, compose any system and/or intervention. Thus the resulting total aesthetic, or “beauty,” of a system becomes the legitimate objective for any intervention. This logic/approach is aided by the traditional Chinese concept that mental activities are

located in the heart. The Chinese word *hsin* means the “heart-mind,” i.e., thoughts and feelings are inseparable. This, of course, contrasts with the complete separation, and presumed opposition, of the mind (thoughts/reason) and the heart (feelings/emotions) postulated by Descartes and embedded in the scientific thinking of the West. To coin a new phrase: *action composition* is an iterative, participatory methodology, based on artistic sensibilities, used to compose and re-compose situations and systems to reflect harmony and balance in thoughts, feelings, and actions.

Being Values Centered. When change is self-generating, continual, and cyclical, the primary consideration is how to maintain balance, harmony, and equilibrium. In Confucianism, this was done by following the Way (the *Tao*) and adhering to the five constant virtues of benevolence or human-heartedness (*Jen*); righteousness

Table 1: Two Views of Change

OD/Western	Cyclical/Confucian
» Focus on the Future	» Attend to the Past–Present–Future
» Assume Satisfied People Hold On	» Assume Wise People Let Go and Realign
» Overcome Resistance	» Maintain Balance and Harmony
» Think in Terms of Either/Or	» Thinks in Terms of Both/And
» Plan and Manage Change	» Cultivate System Self-Renewal
» Think Analytically	» Think Holistically
» Use Reason and Logic	» Use Artistry and Composition
» Measure Progress	» Be Values Centered

or duty (*Yi*); propriety or following correct principles (*Li*); good faith or living up to one’s word (*Hsin*); and wisdom or using knowledge to benefit the world (*Chih*). One might thereby become an exemplary person (*Chün Tzu*) or a sage (*Sheng Jen*) who could serve as a model for others to emulate. Consequently, respect (“face”), not fame or fortune, was most important (see Munro, 1969; Hall & Ames, 1987).

Thus, how well one adheres to values or principles (e.g., is “centered” in virtue) replaces linear progress as the primary consideration. In OD, this would mean clarity about and adherence to a set of core values that should be exhibited constantly throughout any change process. This might include, for example, core values related to humanism, democratic processes, equality, respect, dignity, and so forth (for a more detailed discussion of OD values see Gellerman, Frankel, & Ladenson, 1990). In a cyclical process, being centered is paramount. Remember, a wheel does not roll very far if the hub is misaligned.

These tendencies, in combination, are likely to lead to change processes and interventions intended to help maintain harmony and balance while fully realizing the current condition/form/state, and also being prepared and able to let go and align with another condition/form/state as it begins to emerge. This is accomplished from an aesthetic, values centered, both/and, past-present-future, holistic orientation.

Commentary

The discussion so far has been primarily devoted to a presentation and analysis of the two different change models (see Table 1 for a summary of the meta-themes). Next, some of the “so whats” that are implied or raised by the presentation will be highlighted and briefly discussed.

OD is Culturally Based. Much or all of OD is based in the cultural tradition of the Western European Enlightenment, i.e., the “modern era” in the West. Consequently any organizational change beliefs, assumptions, theories, practices, etc., that exist outside that cultural matrix are likely to seem strange, illogical, nonscientific, and/or mystical. This includes both premodern and postmodern (e.g., the “new sciences”) assumptions and theories.

OD is Culturally Biased. Over the years a wide range of theorists and practitioners have wondered whether or not some, or all, OD values are culturally biased (see, for example, Jaeger, 1986). What is suggested here is that the fundamental model of change underlying OD is culturally based and therefore inherently biased toward that culture. This does not necessarily mean OD cannot be successfully applied outside its originating culture; it does mean that a lack of awareness and appreciation for the underlying assumptions and values of OD and the host culture could be a recipe for failure.

Different Fundamental Models of Change Reveal Different Options and Approaches.

Most or all OD practitioners face the same “chronic” issues in their work, e.g., getting people to focus on the future, dealing with resistance, measuring success, to name a few. We also are alert to any new and/or different interventions for addressing these issues. What we may not be doing, however, is searching for different paradigms of change that would suggest fundamentally different ways to think about, and therefore deal with, change and change issues. It may not be time to “start going around in circles,” but it is certainly time to explore options in addition to “unfreezing-movement-refreezing.”

Raising Questions about the Fundamental Model of Change Underlying OD Will Feel Threatening and/or Disorienting.

Much like change work that raises questions about an organization’s deep culture, looking critically at some of OD’s most basic assumptions will feel threatening and/or disorienting to some or many in the profession. Nevertheless, this is the avenue that offers the greatest potential for innovation in the field.

OD, as a Profession, Must Attend to its Own Renewal. We, like the systems we serve, are at a turning point (Capra, 1982; Katz & Marshak, 1993). This is amply documented by the ODN’s Future Search process, the themes and topics of recent ODN conferences, and our own experiences as practitioners. Therefore, in the spirit of this article, following are some brief Confucian cyclical change perspectives to consider.

- » Focus on our past-present-future. We should honor our origins and legacies, consider what we are becoming, and help shape and be shaped by the future. We should continually conceive of the profession as “in process.” Debates pitting our past against our future against our present are ultimately a waste of energy and should be avoided.
- » Let go and align ourselves with the emerging future. We cannot afford to delude ourselves into believing we can hang on to our past practices and orthodoxies. Nothing stays the same forever.

We should discern what will be needed to be successful in the emerging future, and then create, continue, and/or align with the required theories, methods, and techniques.

- » Focus on the relationships needed to maintain balance and harmony. As conditions and contexts change, we should continually balance and rebalance the profession's range of theories, technologies, and work foci. This also includes addressing the relationships needed to maintain harmony and balance among the different aspects and components of OD, the members of the practitioner community, our relationships with client systems, and our own supporting systems such as the OD Network.
- » Think in terms of both/and. It would be helpful if we could use a both/and orientation to explore innovative and established ideas and practices together. Too much of our professional energy seems, at times, to get caught up in discussions about whose approach/idea is "right" or "wrong." We need innovation, and the essence of creativity has always been to bring together what had previously been disjoined.
- » Think holistically. It would also be helpful to expand our horizons and use more holistic thinking about who we are, what we do, and where and how we fit in the scheme of things. This also includes incorporating more holistic approaches and methodologies into our work, and working more interdependently with a wider range of others.
- » Intervene based on artistry and composition. In working to compose our emerging future, we must be mindful of our heads and hearts and use artistry as well as rationality in our efforts. Practitioners and clients are attracted to OD not only for what it can do as a tool, but by the moods, feelings, emotions, and sensibilities it helps engender. In short, we should be guided by our heart-minds as we compose and re-compose the heart-mind of the profession. OD in the future must continue to be both efficacious and emotionally evocative.
- » Be values centered. We should

continually, and especially now, reexamine and rededicate ourselves and the profession to a set of values. This not only centers and unites us as a profession, but also forms us as a professional community worthy of emulation.

- » Seek self-renewal through release and augmentation. We should trust that renewal will emerge naturally as we follow the above precepts and thereby release what is no longer needed, while adding or augmenting that which becomes essential.

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The individual items discussed above may not necessarily seem new or different. In some ways, what may be most different is their interrelationship as a whole, as well as what is not included. What I can unequivocally assert, however, is that before I studied the Confucian cyclical change model (1) I would not have conceived of the situation facing OD in the same way; (2) my list of proposed remedies would have been different; and (3) my overall "sense" or gestalt of this moment in the life of the OD profession would have been quite different.

Endings and Beginnings

This discussion has chronicled some of my wanderings and discoveries over the past 20 years and marks both endings and beginnings. I am reminded that the journey of the hero is also cyclical: an outward search followed by a return home, transformed (Campbell, 1968). I returned to Korea after 20 years, bringing my knowledge and experience related to organizations and change. I returned from Korea and my subsequent research with new insights about organizations and change. From the vantage point of

the present I looked to the ancient past to discover new ideas to address the future. Endings and beginnings and endings. Cycles of cycles; one journey ends, another now begins.

Postscript

Looking back at the ideas and experiences that led to this article triggered a number of reflections I would like to share.

First, is the importance of an "anthropological mind" in all aspects of OD work.

By that I mean developing the orientation and skills to be able to discern or develop hypotheses about the deep assumptions that may be underlying action in a particular social setting. Working through the ideas that led to this article convinced me that there are underlying assumptions to everything we do and provided me with some insights into how to observe, reflect upon, and test cultural assumptions, especially based on what is said and written. This orientation has become a core part of my practice and leads me to believe that some training in cultural anthropology might usefully be included in the education and training of OD consultants.

Second, I am reminded of how the context of OD has shifted and remained the same over the past decades. At the time I wrote this article OD was reacting to questions about its continued efficacy. The question "Is OD dead?" had been asked as early as 1989 and the field was in one of its periods of doubt and self-reflection. At the same time calls for ways to help organizations deal with on-going change and "permanent white water" were increasing; and all in an increasingly cross-cultural and global context. Recently, however, when I re-read the article for this publication

just after the OD Network Conference in Baltimore in 2011, I was struck by how many of my comments about the state of organization development and the OD Network in the early 1990s seemed once again true in the early 2010s. I had thought before I re-read it that that part of the article would surely prove dated. Of course if things really are cyclical this should not be a big surprise.

Third, I would like to remind today's readers about the original intent behind the article. For me it was an opportunity to raise questions about the then dominant assumptions shaping OD ways of thinking about change in order to encourage new assumptions and new possibilities, rather than trying to advance a specific, alternative model as somehow "superior." In other words, it was a way through contrast to highlight potentially unexamined and limiting aspects of OD. Of course that also reflected my dominant way of knowing and learning, which is to note differences more so than similarities (Marshak, 2009). Interestingly, over the years I have made many trips to the post-Confucian countries of Japan, Korea, China, Hong Kong, and Singapore where I found my hosts were mainly interested in learning the latest Western models of change (Marshak, 2004). So instead of my insights about *yin-yang* and five forces change dynamics being called upon, what instead proved most helpful was what I had learned from my readings in Chinese and Confucian philosophy about some of the core cultural dimensions shaping the social order and etiquette in all of those countries. These include, for example, hierarchy as a central aspect of the natural way of all things, the five fundamental relationships, the primacy of family, and the importance of harmony in all matters. It is also worth noting that after officially repudiating Confucianism about 100 years ago there is now a revival of Confucian philosophy in China and throughout the region. For those who might aspire to work in the East Asian region, I would encourage learning the basic ideas of the Confucian social order. I found that knowledge helped me to be more culturally literate throughout East Asia.

Finally, I'd like to thank the *OD Practitioner* for once again recognizing my work and also to acknowledge and thank my Korean host for the trips, experiences, and discussions that led me to study Confucianism and write this article, my longtime colleague Dr. Jeong, Jae-Chang. –RJM, 2011

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Robert J. Marshak, PhD, is Senior Scholar in Residence for the MSOD Program at American University, Washington, DC and maintains a global consulting practice. His current interests include discourse-based change processes and dialogic OD. Marshak is a recipient of the Organization Development Network's Lifetime Achievement Award. He can be contacted at marshak@american.edu.

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“Like most Wall Street issues, any message of a failure regarding rolling-out this change initiative would cause a rumble on Wall Street in these challenging times. Kerry was aware that failure was not an option, but if the CEO wants it, she must deliver the upcoming change initiative as a large group intervention.”

Case History

Exploring Large Group Interventions

By Therese F. Yaeger and
Peter F. Sorensen



Kerry slumped at her desk in need of an OD mentor. As a young OD consultant with a recent masters degree in OD, Kerry is the only official OD person in her firm, Levelco. Having just left the CEO's office five minutes earlier, Kerry wondered if she was in over her head with the assignment the CEO, Stanley, just gave her. Apparently, Stanley heard about the success of large group interventions from other CEOs at a Wall Street executive meeting the previous week, and he thinks it would be a great idea to do a large group intervention here at Levelco.

Kerry felt overwhelmed. Her success at Levelco and her past jobs involved OD projects on building successful project teams, dealing with executive conflict issues, and leading some technical pieces of strategic changes. Kerry's shortcoming is in the large group/search conference/OD summit work.

At Levelco, Kerry's work has always been appreciated. She has been a welcome addition in many senior team issues, even with up and coming young executives who appreciate her approach to change initiatives. In her past OD work, and her two plus years at the firm, she ran the OD Department as a solo internal consultant, and her OD expertise has proven measurably successful.

Levelco, like so many Wall Street firms these days, was planning a new initiative for a roll-out within a month. Like most Wall Street issues, any message of a failure regarding rolling-out this change initiative would cause a rumble on Wall Street in these challenging times.

Kerry was aware that failure was not an option, but if the CEO wants it, she must deliver the upcoming change initiative as a large group intervention.

Kerry needed to roll up her sleeves and get an initial plan to Stanley's executive team with appropriate timelines. She knew as a one-person OD operation that she would need support. Also, Kerry had just attended the annual OD Network conference and remembered a session that discussed the topic of OD summits and large group efforts. She quickly checked her notes from the conference and found three contacts—Gina Hinrichs, Angie Keister, and Eric Sanders—who may be able to help.

Kerry's questions for her contacts are:

- a) What are the top ten tools and techniques required for this effort? How can she map out the time line and people power required for this effort?
- b) Beyond large group interventions, are there particular approaches that can provide positive aspects to change, while still keeping a business imperative for Levelco?
- c) How can she define success on this initiative? What data should she use to measure the outcomes?

Gina Hinrichs

Kerry poses an excellent question in wanting to go beyond large group interventions (LGI) to additional approaches that can provide positive aspects to change. Before I address her specific question, it is appropriate to reflect on the larger context.

Kerry's situation is enviable for those who have struggled to gain awareness and acknowledgment for OD. It bodes well that her CEO has learned about LGI from colleagues on Wall Street. LGI, as an engagement approach, is being seen to have the capability to positively impact a bottom line. Knowing that Levelco's top leadership is willing to risk and support an OD engagement approach to change is hopeful.

I would first acknowledge Kerry for reaching out to her OD community. Then, I would caution her to understand my insights are based on my experience and research. She must connect my suggestions to Levelco's context. She is the cultural expert to make the fit to Levelco's reality.

Kerry can go beyond LGI by focusing on broader OD engagement approaches. The term "intervention" in LGI indicates to non-OD practitioners that there is something to be fixed. With engagement approaches, there is a focus on moving from good to great. Engagement approaches are designed for engagement, alignment, and commitment of diverse stakeholders. These powerful OD approaches utilize holistic and strength-focused perspectives to achieve innovation and faster cycle times for change. Instead of dealing with resistance to change, an organization will achieve engagement with change.

To meet Kerry's need for a design, a phased approach is offered below. The first three phases should occur over 3-6 months.

Phase I (2 days needed)—Provide clarity, connection, and commitment—Define the "What."

» Day 1: Conduct a SOAR—Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Results (Stavros & Hinrichs, 2009)—strategic visioning session with leadership. This leadership session may involve 8 or 80 depending on Levelco's situation. Leaders still need to lead and they have the unique role to provide a broader and external perspective. They must provide the "What" of the new initiative. From this session, clarity and concrete results for the new initiative are defined.

» Day 2: Identify specifications for critical areas of the new initiative. This can be accomplished through a process that systematically investigates what is needed for organizational structure, systems, culture, and process as they relate to the new initiative. Kerry should employ a model that fits Levelco's culture. For example, McKinsey's 7s or the Burke-Litwin Change Model helps to organize the conversations.

Phase II (1 day needed)—Design Levelco's engagement approach. *The Change Handbook* (Holman, Devane, & Cady, 2007) is a useful resource to determine what approach would be appropriate for Levelco's change initiative. To learn and improve the odds of a favorable outcome, Kerry should engage an external consultant for this first experience. Levelco's goal should be to make engagement approaches part of the culture, not just an event.

Phase III (2-3 days needed)—Conduct the LGI. The approach will afford diverse stakeholders engagement, alignment, and ownership of the identified projects for the new initiative. The stakeholders determine the "How" of the new initiative.

Phase IV (Ongoing)—Provide follow up. As an internal consultant, Kerry can effectively support the teams and projects with dashboards, celebrations, and learning.

Again, Kerry must review and refine the above approach for Levelco's culture. She needs to take a deep breath and realize the risk to Levelco that doing nothing is greater than the risk of experimenting with a new OD approach. The potential rewards of engagement approaches are infinitely greater. Good luck.

Angie Keister

Kerry should strongly consider her strengths and past successes in determining which large group intervention approaches to use. Given Kerry's technical project management success, I would strongly recommend she consider a Collaborative Management Research (CMR)

Approach or Socio-Technical Systems (STS) approach.

If Levelco is interested in Six-Sigma or Lean technologies, then an STS approach will parallel and complement those efforts and utilize the embedded organizational knowledge. Additionally, with Kerry's tactical experience and success at change efforts, this would be a great way for her to help guide and facilitate the team.

Measuring outcomes for success is also critical. I would recommend clarifying performance measures according to what matters to the CEO. For Levelco, I would take a multi-level approach to measuring outcomes, including some or all of the following:

1. Personal change stories—team members and change recipients, capture these and make them public in a "safe" way.
2. Employee survey data—If there is a standard measure, use it and see if it changes before, during, and after the change.
3. Measure the impact of the organization's social network. For example, identify how many members of the research team interact with regularly and map those connections visually, or put them into numbers that can translate to a percentage of involvement (e.g., 50% of the employees across the organization participated at an involvement level of 3% or greater).
4. Measure the impact of and connections made by the change communications – find a way for the communication to be two-way, and measure the number of people who engaged in the change discussion.
5. Account for the time invested by each research team member, and alongside that graph/measure their level of engagement in the organization to help justify their growth, learning, and time spent on the project.
6. Measure the outcomes of the change team several times throughout the process (including any in-house survey tools, ideas, common way to work together, or training), and produce an outcome report that classifies each outcome as a competitive advantage,

sustainable resource, or appropriated resource (do or can you own it?). This translates outcomes into strategic and economic terms that will be a language that is understood by the C-suite.

My last piece of advice would be to recommend a shadow consultant; someone who has experience in the intervention approach that Kerry chooses and can serve as her coach and adviser. Specifically, it would be helpful to have a shadow consultant with a research background, easily obtained from a local PhD program, as this person will have access to the latest academic research, and can help inform the process as well as assist Kerry with capturing what she learns and contributing it to the OD community. A shadow consultant can remain unknown to the large group team members, and often is never on site.

Eric Sanders

Kerry has a great opportunity here, as both she and Levelco have a clean slate regarding the large group intervention process. She has been running good interventions for two years, and has credibility across the firm. Now it is time to scale up a bit. I would recommend she approach this process in four general steps: set expectations, review her own “tool kit” and resources, design the intervention, and show results (based on the agreed-upon expectations).

Set expectations. One point to remember, especially on Wall Street, is that leaders tend to focus on problems. It is our job in OD to help them look past those problems and envision a positive future, whatever techniques we might use.

Kerry needs to determine what goal(s) need to be accomplished, and when. Business results generally fall into four categories: output (frequently revenue), speed (e.g., processing time), quality (e.g., client satisfaction), and cost reduction. Levelco is sure to measure items in all of these categories. Which does the CEO want to improve, by how much, and how soon? A good conversation should clarify that.

The CEO gave her a tight timeline. Once the need is clarified, an intervention

technique can be chosen and a timeline created, which may require more than four weeks to be done well. When presented with a timeline to achieve the desired result, the CEO might find more time to implement the change. Kerry should do her research, and come back to the time restriction if necessary.

Toolkit and resources. Kerry has proven herself good at team-building, conflict resolution, and strategic change. What else can she do? Data analysis? Applying systematic processes? Putting local change

There are two key considerations, regardless of which process you use. First, in the design, do not ask a question if you are not willing to act on the results. The disappointment from unmet expectations by the participants is worse than if you had not asked the question to begin with. Second, involve as many people as possible in the process. If the entire population cannot attend the large-group event, have leaders at various levels interview their direct reports beforehand, so they are vested as their representatives. Keep communications open in the action planning process and implementation of the plan agreed upon. Transparency is critical for any OD work.

in systemic context? There are bound to be many transferrable skills Kerry can apply to this context, which will build her confidence further. As to human resources, Kerry has many available: previous clients, colleagues and faculty members from her OD master’s program, and contacts in the OD Network could provide both conceptual help and assist in running events of whatever size.

Plan the intervention. The first two steps were necessary to see what needed to be done and what resources Kerry has available. Here’s where the rubber meets the road. A large group intervention might be a summit using Appreciative Inquiry, Future Search, World Café, or another process, depending on what Levelco wants to accomplish. All of these interventions

collect and process a lot of qualitative data quickly. This non-numeric data is then collected into themes and brought to life by the power of the collective voice of the people.

There are two key considerations, regardless of which process you use. First, in the design, do not ask a question if you are not willing to act on the results. The disappointment from unmet expectations by the participants is worse than if you had not asked the question to begin with. Second, involve as many people as possible in the process. If the entire popula-

tion cannot attend the large-group event, have leaders at various levels interview their direct reports beforehand, so they are vested as their representatives. Keep communications open in the action planning process and implementation of the plan agreed upon. Transparency is critical for any OD work.

Show results. If she has done the first three steps well, this part is relatively easy. Go back to the expectations, and jointly with the clients, set reasonable milestones toward achieving them using the information from the large-group event and follow-up. Celebrate successes early and often, as that will create momentum toward more and greater success.

Now the fun begins for Kerry. Take a deep breath, and get started!

Yaeger and Sorensen Respond

Our expert panelists have provided exceptional advice for Kerry—thank you Gina, Angie, and Eric! We would like to follow-up and reinforce some of the comments made by the panel. There are a number of very important, even crucial themes that run through the advice given by our panel. First, team with an external person skilled in the intervention (the evidence is very strong that external/internal OD partners and teams contribute significantly to the success of OD). Second, address the importance of expanding beyond the intervention itself and evaluate the intervention over time, using both quantitative and qualitative measures. Third, our panel sets forth several alternatives for appropriate large group interventions that could be used to match the objectives to be accomplished within the situation. Fifth, is the specific suggestion that the OD term “intervention” itself reflects or implies the situation is being defined as a problem “something to be fixed,” while large group interventions in fact are oriented toward building on strengths and successes, moving from good to great. Sixth, OD is recognized by Levelco (a culture with a strong orientation toward success and accomplishment) as an important vehicle for successful organization change with important implications for “bottom line” results. What a great opportunity! We are sure that with the advice of her OD panel colleagues Kerry will continue her successes at Levelco.

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Gina Hinrichs, PhD, is president of Hinrichs Consulting and an adjunct professor for Capella University, Benedictine University, and Lawrence Technological University. She brings over 25 years of for-profit and nonprofit organizational experience as both an internal and external consultant. Her areas of expertise are: innovation, strategy, process improvement, communication, culture change, team building, organizational design, and executive coaching. She has authored several articles and books including *The Thin Book of SOAR: Building Strengths-Based Strategy*. She can be reached at ghinrichs517@gmail.com.

Angie Keister, owner of Cairn Coaching and Consulting, LLC, is a passionate OD consultant and leadership coach with 10 years of experience in Organizational Development. She began her career as an internal OD practitioner designing and facilitating OD projects first at a truck and engine manufacturing firm transitioning later to the health care industry. She is certified as a Professional Coach, through the International Coach Federation and is currently a PhD candidate with the 8th cohort in Organization Development at Benedictine University. Her research interests are understanding how thriving relates to organization change and team performance. She can be reached at cairncoach@gmail.com.

Eric Sanders is an OD economist—an independent consultant who helps leaders and their organizations achieve measurable results through developing their people. He has worked both internally and externally, and has helped clients in many industries, including retail, telecommunications, manufacturing and nonprofits. He is also a faculty member at Benedictine University and the Lake Forest Graduate School of Management. He can be reached at eric.sanders@ODEconomist.com.

Therese Yaeger, PhD, and **Peter Sorensen, PhD**, (co-editors with Homer Johnson of the Case History feature) are the Associate Professor and Director of the PhD program in Organization Development and the MSMOB Programs at Benedictine University in Lisle and Springfield, Illinois. Therese can be reached at tyaeger@ben.edu.

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